SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS
THE
HOMILIES

Ὁ ἁγιώτα
τος ἀρχιεπί
σκοπος Θε
σαλον
κης
ΓΡ
ΝΕΟΣ
ΘΟΜΟ
ΤΟΥΡΓΟ

MOUNT THABOR PUBLISHING

SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS
THE HOMILIES

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THE
HOMILIES

Edited and translated from the original Greek
with an introduction and notes by

CHRISTOPHER VENIAMIN

with the assistance of
THE MONASTERY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
ESSEX, ENGLAND

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SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS: THE HOMILIES

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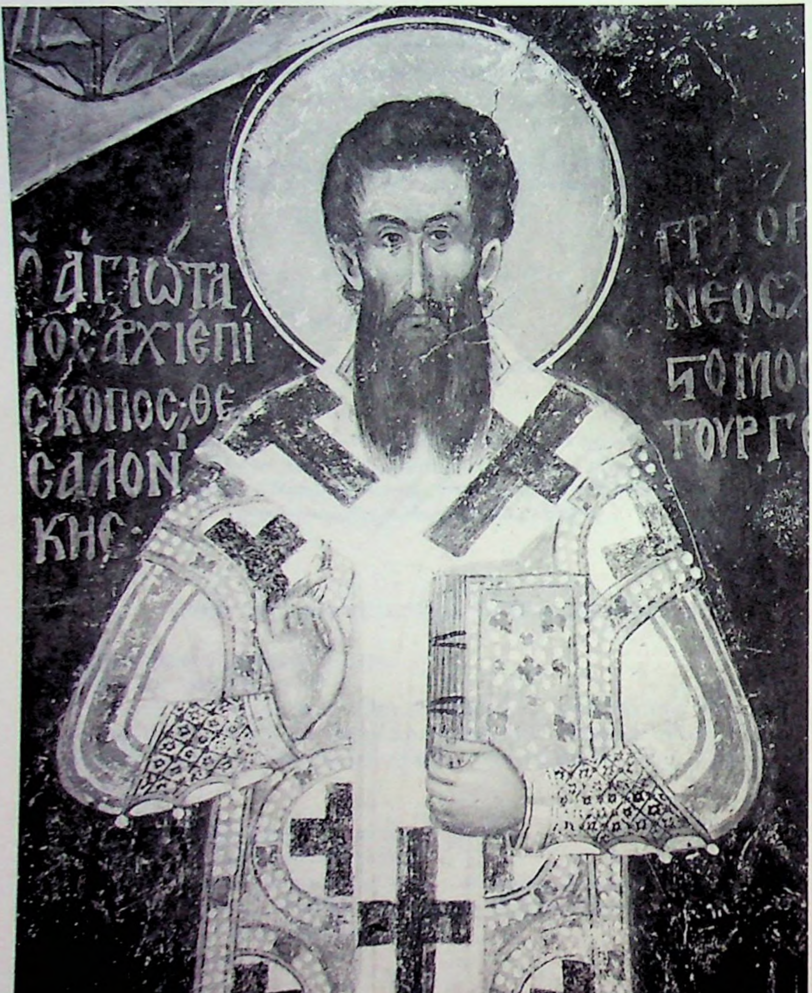
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ΓΡΗΓΟΡ ΝΕΟΣ ΘΑΥΜΑΤΟΥΡΓ

Saint Gregory Palamas (*c.* 1296–1359)
Chapel of the Holy Unmercenary Physicians,
Vatopedi Monastery, Mount Athos

Ὀρθοδοξίας ὁ φωστήρ,
Ἐκκλησίας τὸ στήριγμα καὶ διδάσκαλε,
τῶν μοναστῶν ἡ καλλονή,
τῶν θεολόγων ὑπέρμαχος ἀπροσμάχητος,
Γρηγόριε θαυματουργέ,
Θεσσαλονίκης τὸ καύχημα,
κήρυξ τῆς χάριτος,
ἱκέτευε διὰ παντός,
σωθῆναι τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν.

Luminary of the Orthodox faith,
support of the Church and teacher,
splendour of monastics,
invincible champion of theologians,
O wonderworker Gregory,
boast of Thessalonica,
preacher of grace,
pray without ceasing,
that our souls be saved.

Apolytíkion for the Saint
Fourth Plagial (Tone Eight)
for the Second Sunday in Great Lent

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Foreword

THE PRESENT EDITION of *Saint Gregory Palamas: The Homilies* marks a most significant event in the theological and spiritual world.

Saint Gregory gave to the Church what is surely the most complete synthesis and perfect formulation of the apostolic tradition of all generations. His theology, in a charismatic and "existential" way, recapitulates, in its entirety, the spiritual experience of the saints of the Old and New Testaments, who, with noble spirit, appropriated and ministered to Christ's great "mystery of godliness". His word possesses a creative power, is always new, and informs the heart with grace. It stands as a radiant sign of God for every generation. Most assuredly, it imparts the veritable solution to the impasses of our generation, and leads its "labouring and heavy laden" children to true knowledge of God, to the festival of love of the Trinitarian God.

More specifically, the homilies of St. Gregory, in spirited and uncomplicated idiom, render his entire life's work accessible to the people of God. In fact, they form the most complete introduction not only to his theology, but to the theology of all the great Fathers of the Church.

This good shepherd, image of the Good and Great Shepherd, offers to the faithful strong and ready meat, the treasure of the knowledge of the person of Christ, able to strengthen them in His Way, to preserve them from the assaults of evil spirits, to make them unshakeable in the confession of the author of their salvation.

These homilies, which cover the themes of many of the Sundays and most of the feasts of the liturgical year, will become an abundant supply of spiritual knowledge and an inexhaustible source of inspiration to ministers of God's word. They will furnish them with the wherewithal to carry out their apostolic mission: to lead God's people into the rich pastures of the gifts of the Eternal Spirit.

Archimandrite Zacharias Zacharou
PATRIARCHAL AND STAVROPEGIC MONASTERY OF
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST,
ESSEX, ENGLAND

* * *

Preface

THE WORK IN HAND is the first full English edition of all sixty-three extant homilies by St. Gregory Palamas.

The current edition began in the form of a prospective three-volume series, only two volumes of which were actually published, in 2002 and in 2004 (see Introduction, p. xxxvii, n. 34).

A parallel series of the homilies, *Sermons by Saint Gregory Palamas*, arranged thematically and intended for a more popular readership, has also appeared in recent years, also published by Mount Thabor Publishing, 2005– .

C. V.

ST. TIKHON'S SEMINARY
FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD, 2009

* * *

Preface to the 2nd Reprint Edition

THE SECOND REPRINT EDITION INCLUDES the revised indexes of the 1st reprint edition, 2014, and minor corrections throughout.

C. V.

ST. TIKHON'S SEMINARY
ST. GREGORY PALAMAS (2ND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT), 2016

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Monastery of St. John the Baptist, Essex, England, for inviting me to collaborate with them in the production of the first full translation into English of the homilies of St. Gregory Palamas. In particular, I should like to thank my fathers in God, Elder Sophrony Sakharov, to whose memory this work is respectfully dedicated; the Very Reverend Archimandrite Kyrill Akon, Abbot of the Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, for his example, unfailing support and encouragement; and Archimandrite Zacharias Zacharou, by whose initiative this project was conceived and coordinated, and by whose intercessions, after more than a decade, it has now been brought to fruition.

My appreciation also goes out to Sister Pelagia Selfe, who, under the direction of Elder Zacharias, furnished me with the first draft of the main text, which was subsequently diligently checked against the original Greek, reworked and corrected.

For the benefit of the student of theology, I have considered it expedient to provide detailed notes and indexes. Concerning the latter, I should like to thank Catherine Kostyn, of Kostyn Indexing, for compiling the indexes of Names and Subjects and of Scriptural References. I should also like to thank Charles William Webb, Jr., for his kind and generous practical assistance, and express my indebtedness to Kory William Warr, who, in memory of his father, Clyde Gene Warr, graciously provided the funds for the indexing of this project.

I am also greatly indebted to the Very Reverend Abbot Ephraim and brethren of the Holy and Great Monastery of Vatopedi, Mount Athos, for so kindly providing me with a copy of the oldest extant icon of St. Gregory Palamas – a 1371 wall-painting from the chapel of the "Holy Unmercenary Physicians" at Vatopedi (see p. vi above).

I also gratefully acknowledge Deacon Joseph Lucas and Francis Hickok Erdman, Jr., for reading the final text so meticulously; and all those at St. Tikhon's Seminary, who in various ways contributed to the production of this work, especially Hieromonk Juvenaly Repass and His Grace, Bishop Tikhon Mollard.

Words cannot express the depth of my gratitude to my sister, Penelope Khalifey, to my brother, Neoklis N. Veniamin, and also to my wife, Anna, for their readiness to help in so many aspects of this project, logistical and otherwise.

Though all imperfections herein are solely the responsibility of the editor, such merits as this work may deserve must be ascribed entirely to Gregory Palamas, one of the greatest saints ever to walk the face of the earth.

C. V.

ST. TIKHON'S SEMINARY
FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD, 2009

Abbreviations

AV	The Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible, 1611.
Lampe	G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon,* Oxford University Press, 5th impression, 1978.
Liddell and Scott	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon,* revised and augmented by H. S. Jones and R. McKenzie (et al.), Oxford University Press, repr. ed., 1977.
Lxx	The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek. Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton (ed.), *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English,* London, 1851, reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982.
ODB	Alexander P. Kazhdan (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium,* 3 Vols. Oxford University Press, 1991.
ODCC	E. A. Livingstone (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church,* Oxford University Press, 3rd edition, 1997.
PG	J. P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Graeca,* 1–161 Vols., Paris, 1857-1866.

Introduction

IT IS NO COINCIDENCE that the Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of St. Gregory Palamas (*c.* 1296 – 1359), Archbishop of Thessalonica, on the Second Sunday of Great Lent, immediately following the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy and preceding the Sunday of the Precious and Life-giving Cross;[1] for by so doing, She underlines the fact that, in his life and teaching, St. Gregory stands as an unsurpassable witness to the Orthodox Christian faith and a supremely skilled guide to the mystery of the Cross, the vision of Christ in glory.

However, despite his present exalted liturgical status, and despite the fact that St. Gregory was formally recognized as a saint as early as April of 1368 – only nine years after his death[2] – from the end of the sixteenth century onwards a "veil of darkness" began to descend over his teaching and that of the other Hesychasts,[3] and it was not until the advent of the "Kollyvades"[4] in the second half of the eighteenth century, that appreciation for the importance of his teaching was revived, and the liturgical commemoration of St. Gregory was, to a significant degree, restored and brought back into sharper focus.[5]

This revival, however, like the "philocalic" movement of the Kollyvades as a whole, was destined to be short-lived, inasmuch as it was limited both demographically and chronologically. As the hagiographic tradition of the Turkish period shows, this was a time in which greater emphasis was given to "lay saints", particularly to martyrs, wonderworkers and holy women.[6] Moreover, the majesty of the Hesychasts' ascetico-theological vision was recognized chiefly by monastics, that is to say, by those who, possessed of the resolute desire for the perfection in Christ, could best relate to and appreciate the profound significance of their tradition. Thus, the hesychast revival of the Kollyvades was predominantly (though not exclusively) a monastic one. Coupled with the fact that monastic life on the Holy Mountain (as also elsewhere) was about to experience a severe decline, the revival of Hesychasm was destined to be limited in chronological terms as well. Hence, by the middle of the nineteenth century, St. Gregory and the Hesychasts were once again all but forgotten – even on Athos itself.[7]

Notwithstanding certain notable exceptions along the way,[8] it was not until the pioneering work of such eminent scholars as Krivocheine, Chrestou and Meyendorff,[9] that St. Gregory was again rediscovered and came to be better appreciated in both east and west. But even now, it must be conceded, this appreciation remains, for the most part, on the level of academic theology and chiefly, therefore, among those trained in Patristic studies. This is due to the fact that hitherto St. Gregory has been presented principally in terms of the theological controversies of his day, in which he played the leading rôle. These controversies involved the fundamental questions of the "essence-energies" distinction in God and the nature of the vision of God; and St. Gregory's writings in response to his three main theological opponents (Barlaam, Akindynus, and Gregoras)[10] came mainly in the form of long and highly technical systematic treatises.[11]

It is important to note, however, that in addition to his polemical works, there are other equally significant writings in the Palamite corpus, and it is to these that we should turn for a fuller picture of the man and his teaching. Now, among the best examples of such works are his treatises on the spiritual life – his *Encomium for Saint Peter the Athonite,*[12] his exhortation *To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia,* and his *A New Testament Decalogue*[13] – and, most especially, his homilies.

The Homilies

SAINT GREGORY'S HOMILIES are among the finest in Patristic literature.[14] In his treatment of the manifold themes contained therein, he is remarkably consistent in maintaining a balance between originality of thought and strict adherence to the tradition of his predecessors. His genius, however, resides not only in the ability to present his ascetico-theological vision in a cogent and lucid manner, but also in the ease with which he demonstrates, as only a master of the spiritual life can, the refreshingly practical significance of the doctrines of the Church for the life in Christ. And herein lies the importance of his homilies, for in them St. Gregory is also revealed as a true bishop – a good shepherd to his people – striving to lead his flock safely into the harbour of salvation.

Not all of St. Gregory's homilies survive. But those which have come down to us contain the full spectrum of his theology, even if presented (for the most part) in a simplified form. As sermons, moreover, these writings are marked by a lightness of touch and the directness of the spoken word. It is also significant, especially given his remarkable formation and experience, that he does not "talk down" to his audience, but rather strives to raise the level of their own understanding of the spiritual life.[15] And like St. Symeon the New Theologian before him,[16] St. Gregory seeks to demonstrate that it is also possible for lay persons "living in the world" to practise the hesychastic way of life.[17]

Most of St. Gregory's extant homilies were written during his tenure as Archbishop of Thessalonica, between 1347 and 1359,[18] but not all of them. In fact, they span the full length of St. Gregory's writing career. It was in 1334 at the Great Lavra on Athos, after receiving a vision in which he was encouraged to share the wisdom bestowed upon him from on high, that he began to write.[19] Thus at the age of about thirty-eight St. Gregory began to compose his *Encomium for Saint Peter the Athonite*[20] (originally a homily but later expanded into a lengthy treatise and thenceforward omitted from the collection),[21] and shortly thereafter began to write what is probably his best known homily, Hom. LIII, *On the Entry of the Mother of God into the Holy of Holies*, in which the Theotokos is presented as the archetype of the hesychastic way of life. Towards the end of his life we have Hom. XXXI, for the First of August, which refers to his illness, probably only a few months before his death; and also his last sermon, Hom. XXXII, on Christ's walking on water and on temptations, written on his death-bed, in or shortly before August of 1359.

Some of St. Gregory's homilies were lengthy to begin with, as they were composed for monastic vigils or great feasts. Unusually long are Hom. XVI, *About the Dispensation according to the Flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ,* and Hom. LIII, on the Entry. Hom. XL, on St. John the Baptist was also written on Mount Athos; and at least one, Hom. XXXIX, which refers to the Black Death of 1347, was written either at Constantinople or somewhere else – at any rate, not in Thessalonica.[22] The rest were delivered in Thessalonica, two of which were addressed to monastic communities: Hom. XLII, on the Nativity of the Theotokos, during the vigil for 8 September (perhaps in 1352) at a convent called the Basilikon (Imperial) Monastery of Thessalonica,[23] and probably dedicated to the Birth of the Theotokos;[24] and Hom. L, on the Gerasene Demoniac, inasmuch as he employs the phrase, "we monks" (ἡμεῖς οἱ μοναχοί).[25] Hom. LXIII, *To Those who Find Hard to Bear All the Different Kinds of Difficulties which Come Upon Us from All Sides,* was delivered, shortly after his entry into the city, before political, military and ecclesiastical dignitaries.[26] Thus, though the homilies are set forth in liturgical sequence,[27] this is not the order in which they were originally written and delivered.[28]

Printed Editions of the Original Text

THE EARLIEST MANUSCRIPTS containing homilies by St. Gregory date back to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,[29] but it was not until 1776 that a printed edition of ten of St. Gregory's homilies was published in Moscow by Christian F. von Matthaei (entitled *Gregorii Thessalonicensis X. Orationes* [Gregory of Thessalonica: Ten Orations]).[30] Dionysios Kleopa, in his *Γρηγορίου Θεσσαλονίκης Ὁμιλίαι ΜΑ´* [Gregory of Thessalonica: Forty-One Homilies] (Jerusalem, 1857), published forty-one homilies,[31] which included eight of those edited by von Matthaei. In 1865 the editors of the *Patrologia Graeca* took Kleopa's text and appended to it the two remaining homilies in von Matthaei's edition, numbering them accordingly, that is to say, as Homs. XLII and XLIII. But these homilies had already been renumbered by the physician Sophokles K. Oikonomos, as Homs. XLVI and XLIX – in his *Γρηγορίου Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Ὁμιλίαι ΚΒ´* [Gregory Palamas Archbishop of Thessalonica: Twenty-Two Homilies] (Athens, 1861)[32] – when he discovered another collection of twenty-two homilies, which included the aforementioned two, and appended them all to the forty-one homilies of Kleopa in correct liturgical sequence, just as they appeared in the manuscript tradition. Hence, the total number of homilies to date is sixty-three.[33]

The Current Translation

THE PRESENT EDITION constitutes the first full translation of the homilies into English,[34] and is based on the best edition available to date, namely, that of Panayiotes K. Chrestou's *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ· Ἅπαντα τὰ Ἔργα* [Gregory Palamas: The Complete Works], Vols.

9–11, which is published in the series *Ἕλληνες Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας* [Greek Fathers of the Church], nos. 72, 76, and 79 (Thessalonica, 1985–1986), with an accompanying Modern Greek translation.[35] This is in fact the preliminary text for the critical edition currently being prepared for publication by Professor Vasileios. S. Pseutonkas, of the School of Theology in the University of Thessalonica, and is to occupy the sixth and final volume in Chrestou's *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ· Συγγράμματα* [Gregory Palamas: The Writings] (Thessalonica, 1962ff).

A Note on Biblical References

EVEN THOUGH SAINT GREGORY himself used the Septuagint (Greek) text of the Old Testament, for purely practical reasons I have considered it expedient to employ the numbering, names, and wording of the Hebrew (Massoretic) text, as found in the more familiar Authorized (King James) Version. Scriptural quotations have been adjusted in favour of the Septuagint rendering only where significant differences occur. Such instances have been indicated by the use of LXX. Also, where names for the Books of the Old Testament differ, the Septuagint names have been indicated in the Index of Scriptural References and set in parentheses. Books of the Old Testament which are included in the Septuagint's (Alexandrian) canon of Scripture, but not in the Hebrew (Palestinian) canon, have been placed, for the sake of simplicity, at the end of the Old Testament section in the Index of Scriptural References.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. The commemoration of his repose is on 14 November, see n. 3 below.

2. By Synodal decree at Constantinople, under the chairmanship of the then Patriarch, St. Philotheus Kokkinos (1300 – 1379), Palamas' disciple and friend, see the *Tome against the Hieromonk Prochorus Cydones who professes things in accordance with the opinions of Barlaam and Akindynus, in which not only is Palamas' sanctity demonstrated, but also that it has been decreed by synod that his memory shall be celebrated annually in all churches*, in PG 151:710D-714B; J. Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*, Patristica Sorbonensia 3 (Paris, 1959), pp. 168–170; Eng. ed. (1964), pp. 111–112; J. Darrouzès, *Les Regestes des actes du Patriarchat de Constantinople, vol. 1: Les actes des Patriarches, fasc. V: Les Regestes de 1310 à 1376* (Paris, 1977),

no. 2540, pp. 453–454; P. K. Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ· Ἅπαντα τὰ Ἔργα* [Gregory Palamas: The Complete Works], vol. 1, in the series *Ἕλληνες Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας* [Greek Fathers of the Church], no. 51 (Thessalonica, 1981), pp. 32–33; D. G. Tsames, "Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς καὶ ἡ ἐποχή του" [Saint Gregory Palamas and His Times], *Πρακτικὰ Θεολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου εἰς τιμὴν καὶ μνήμην τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Γρηγορίου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης τοῦ Παλαμᾶ* [Proceedings of the Theological Conference in honour and memory of our Father among the saints, Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica] (Thessalonica, 1986), 64–65; and in T. Yiangou, "Μαρτυρίες περὶ τῆς μνήμης τοῦ Ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ στὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος" [Testimonia on the Commemoration of Saint Gregory Palamas on the Holy Mountain], *Κληρονομία*, vol. 28, nos. 1–2 (1996; published 1997), 14, n. 13; at which time, moreover, he was included in the *Synodicon* of Orthodoxy.

In both the hymnography and iconography of the Church, St. Gregory is put forward as Her fourth Theologian and fourth Great Hierarch. See *e.g.* the hymns of the Canon for the Matins of his feast, composed by St. Philotheus, in which he is described as being "of the same spirit" (σύμπνοος) and "in perfect unison" (συνῳδός) with the three "Theologians" of the Church – John the Theologian, Gregory the Theologian (329/30 – 389/90), and Symeon the New Theologian (949 – 1022) – and also with the three Great Hierarchs of the fourth century, namely, Basil the Great (*c.* 330 – 379), Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom (*c.* 347 – 407), see Vasileios E. Voloudakis, *Ἀκολουθία τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Γρηγορίου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης τοῦ θαυματουργοῦ τοῦ Παλαμᾶ, ἥτις ποιηθεῖσα ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Φιλοθέου τοῦ Κοκκίνου* [The service for our Father among the saints, Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, the Wonderworker: Composed by the Most Holy Patriarch of Constantinople, Philotheus Kokkinos] (Piraeus, 1978), pp. 95–96.

In recent years, a wall-painting of the saint was uncovered in the side-chapel dedicated to the "Holy Anargyroi" (Holy Unmercenary Physicians) of Vatopedi Monastery (see p. vi above), which was "written" in 1371 (the earliest known iconographic representation of St. Gregory), and in which St. Gregory is presented both as a "new Chrysostom" and as "wonderworker" (see E. N. Tsigaridas, "Εἰκονιστικὲς Μαρτυρίες τοῦ Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ στὴ Θεσσαλονίκη καὶ στὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος" [Iconographical Testimony of Saint Gregory Palamas in Thessalonica and on the Holy Mountain], in *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς στὴν Ἱστορία καὶ τὸ Παρόν* [Saint Gregory Palamas in the Past and Present], ed. G. I. Mantzarides, *Πρακτικὰ Διεθνῶν Ἐπιστημονικῶν Συνεδρίων Ἀθηνῶν (13 – 15 Νοεμβρίου 1988) καὶ Λεμεσοῦ (5 – 7 Νοεμβρίου 1999)* [Proceedings of the International Academic Conferences held at Athens, 13 – 15 November 1998, and Limassol, 5 – 7

November 1999] (Vatopedi Monastery, Mount Athos, 2000), pp. 199–203 (with a summary in English, pp. 205–207); and Yiangou, *op. cit.,* 13, n. 10). Also, the wall-paintings in the apse of the refectory of the Great Lavra (dated 1535), and on the north face of the south-western pillar of the nave of Vlattadon Monastery (built in 1351 – 1371, on the acropolis of the old city of Thessalonica in the 14th century by two brothers and disciples of Palamas, Dorotheus and Markus Vlatte – Dorotheus was Archbishop of Thessalonica from 1371 – 1379), where St. Gregory is portrayed together with the three other Great Hierarchs (dated between 1360 – 1380). And in one of the four pendentives on which the lesser dome of the southern side-chapel of SS. Peter and Paul rests, in the ***katholikon*** of Vlattadon, St. Gregory is depicted together with the three Theologians of the Church (last quarter of the 14th century or beginning of the 15th century). Early iconographic representations of St. Gregory (in the form of wall-paintings and portable icons) may also be found in other monasteries of Athos and churches of Thessalonica, Beroea and Kastoria (St. Philotheus speaks of a church erected at Kastoria in St. Gregory's honour, see the *Tome, op. cit.*, 712B), as well as in Constantinople. See St. Philotheus Kokkinos, *Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἐν ἁγίοις πατέρα ἡμῶν Γρηγόριον Ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Θεσσαλονίκης* [Oration on our holy Father among the saints Gregory Archbishop of Thessalonica] 125, ll. 45–46, 92; 126, ll. 12–13; 128, ll. 1–3; 129, ll. 50–51, ed. D. G. Tsames, in *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου Ἁγιολογικὰ Ἔργα. Α´ Θεσσαλονικεῖς Ἅγιοι* [The Hagiological Works of Philotheus Kokkinos of Constantinople, vol. 1: Thessalonian Saints] Center for Byzantine Studies (Thessalonica, 1985), pp. 576–577, 578, 580–581, 582; Tsigaridas, *op. cit.*, pp. 193–204; Yiangou, *op. cit.,* 12–13; and Hierotheos (Vlachos), Metropolitan of Nafpaktos, *Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς ὡς ἁγιορείτης* [Saint Gregory Palamas as a Hagiorite] (Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 2nd ed, 1996), pp. 394–396; Eng. trans. Esther Williams (1997), pp. 388–390.

3. The primary reasons for this development were liturgical. As the manuscript tradition of liturgical books (Menaia for the month of November, Triodia, Synaxaristes, and so forth) indicates, anomalies in the celebration of St. Gregory's memory appear to stem from the fact that his feastday, that is to say, the day of his repose, fell on 14 November, in other words, on the feast of the holy apostle Philip. It is important to note that the Athonite Typicon was based initially on that of the Monastery of Studios at Constantinople, which ranked the celebration of Christ's apostles after the feasts of the Lord, His Most Holy Mother, the birth and beheading of St. John the Baptist (to whose memory the ***katholikon*** of Studios was dedicated), and SS. Peter and Paul, and that for this reason alone the memory of St. Gregory was bound to be eclipsed by that of the apostle Philip. This clash led to two basic reactions: the first – the Athonite solution – was to move St. Gregory's feast to the Second Sunday in Lent; while the second,

which was characteristic of wider Church practice (with the notable exception of the city of Thessalonica), resulted in its virtual exclusion from the November Menaia. And the fact that his memory survived in the liturgical conscience of the Church is due in large measure to its being moved to the Second Sunday in Lent. For further details, see Yiangou, *op. cit.*, 26; and also in his "Ὁ ἑορτασμὸς τῆς μνήμης τοῦ Ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ" [The celebration of the Memory of Saint Gregory Palamas], in *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς στὴν Ἱστορία καὶ τὸ Παρόν, op. cit.*, p. 126 (with a brief summary in English, p. 128).

4. From Gk. κόλλυβα – *köllyva*, a wheat-cake sweetened with sugar, pomegranate and dried fruit, and mixed with rice, almonds and spices. The ***kollyvades*** – the most important of which were St. Macarius Notaras of Corinth (1731 – 1805), St. Athanasius Parios (1721 – 1813), and St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (*c.* 1749 – 1809) – were so-called because they insisted that memorial services for the departed should be sung only on Saturdays (and not on Sundays, on which due and proper honour should be accorded to the weekly celebration of the resurrection), during which *köllyva* were blessed and distributed among the faithful. The Kollyvades also stressed the importance of frequent communion. See the study by Archimandrite Nicodemus Skrettas, *Ἡ Θεία Εὐχαριστία καὶ τὰ Προνόμια τῆς Κυριακῆς κατὰ τὴν Διδασκαλίαν τῶν Κολλυβάδων* [The Divine Eucharist and the Prerogatives of Sunday according to the Teaching of the Kollyvades] (University of Thessalonica, Th.D. dissertation, 2003).

5. Yiangou, "Μαρτυρίες περὶ τῆς μνήμης τοῦ Ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ στὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος", *op. cit.*, 25–27.

6. For example, St. Alexis "the Man of God" (5th century), St. Xenophon (early 6th century), St. Eupraxia or Euphrasia (*c.* 382 – *c.* 412), St. Catherine of Alexandria (early 4th century), St. Panteleimon or Pantaleon (d. *c.* 305), and St. Charalampes the Hieromartyr and Wonderworker (d. *c.* 198). As Professor Yiangou points out, the *Lives* of these saints "literally inundate the Athonite manuscripts" of this period, see *ibid.*, 26–27, n. 48.

7. The great contribution of the Kollyvades, however, and particularly that of St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, consisted in the fact that, through the publication of his *Φιλοκαλία τῶν ἱερῶν νηπτικῶν* [The Philokalia of the Holy Neptic Fathers] (Venice, 1782); four of five volumes in English thus far, trans. and ed. by G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware (London and Boston, 1979–1995), which contains the second part of the first Triad, and the composition of services to the great Hesychast saints, they brought the memory of St. Gregory and the other Hesychasts back to the liturgical fore. As Professor Yiangou points out (*ibid.*, 27), after the Kollyvades, rarely is the name of St. Gregory Palamas absent from Orthodox liturgical books.

8. In the form of limited editions of St. Gregory's works (only some of which were reprinted in J. P. Migne's PG 150:771–1372 and 151:9–678), which no doubt facilitated the rediscovery of St. Gregory Palamas in the twentieth century. For fuller bibliographical details, see the introductory sections to P. K. Chrestou's critical edition, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ· Συγγράμματα* [Gregory Palamas: The Writings], vols. 1–5 (Thessalonica, 1962–1992); and also n. 9 below.

9. To name but a few. Apart from the posthumous publication of St. Nicodemus' "Πρόλογος εἰς τὰ συγγράμματα τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ" [Prologue to the writings of our Father among the saints Gregory Palamas], *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια* 4 (1883), 93–101, we have the early work of Hegumen Modest (Strelbitsky), *Св. Григорий Палама, митрополит Солунский, поборник православного учения о Фаворском свете и действиях Божиих* [Saint Gregory Palamas, Metropolitan of Thessalonica, Defender of the Orthodox Doctrine concerning the Taborian Light and the Divine Energies] (Kiev, 1860), which, although brief and written on a semi-popular level, remains important for historical reasons, inasmuch as it seeks to identify the key elements in the teaching of Palamas. Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, we have the work of T. Hajistavrou, "Αἱ περὶ τῶν ἡσυχαστῶν τῆς ιδ´ ἑκατονταετηρίδος καὶ τῆς διδασκαλίας αὐτῶν ἔριδες" [The controversies concerning the Hesychasts of the 14th century and their teaching] (Leipzig, 1905), which, as indicated by Papamichael (see below, *Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς*, pp. μϛ´-μη´), apart from being unaware of certain studies in Russian (particularly those of Bishop P. Uspensky, T. Uspensky, P. Syrkou, and K. Radchenko), lacked a certain depth *vis-à-vis* the character and assumptions of St. Gregory's opponents.

The distinction of the first rigorous and in depth study of St. Gregory and his times belongs to G. Papamichael, for his "Αἱ ἡσυχαστικαὶ ἔριδες τοῦ ιδ´ αἰῶνος" [The Hesychast Controversies of the 14th Century], *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος* 5 (1910), 385–425, and especially his *Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς, ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Θεσσαλονίκης· Ἠθικο-πολιτικὴ συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τῶν ἡσυχαστικῶν ἐρίδων τοῦ ιδ´ αἰῶνος* [Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica: An Ethico-political Contribution to the History of the Hesychast Controversy of the 14th Century] (Petersburg – Alexandria, 1911): Papamichael's book also includes a section on the teaching of Palamas as seen in his homilies (*ibid.*, pp. 218–233). Other significant early contributions include: Dumitru Staniloae, "Calea spre lumina dumnezeasca la Sfintului Grigorie Palama" [The Way towards divine Light in Saint Gregory Palamas], *Anuarul Academiei Teologice din Sibiu* 6 (1929–1930), 55–72, and *Viatsa si invatsatura Sfintului Grigorie Palama: cu patru tratate traduse* [The Life and Teaching of Saint Gregory Palamas: with Four Treatises in Translation], seria Teologica 10 (Sibiu, 1938; repr. ed., Bucharest, 1993); Archbishop Basil Krivocheine, "Аскетическое и Богословское Учение Св. Григория Паламы" [The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas], in *Seminarium*

Kondakovianum 8 (Prague, 1936), 99–154; Eng. trans. in *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 4 (1938, repr. ed., 1954), 1–67; T. N. Kastanas, *Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς καὶ ὁ μυστικισμὸς τῶν ἡσυχαστῶν* [Saint Gregory Palamas and the Mysticism of the Hesychasts] (Thessalonica, 1939); Archimandrite Kiprian Kern, "Духовные Предки Св. Григория Паламы" [The Spiritual Predecessors of Saint Gregory Palamas], in *Богословская Мысль* [Theological Thought] 3 (1942), 102–131; "Les élements de la théologie de Grégoire Palamas", *Irénikon* 20 (1947), 6–33, 164–193; *Антропология Св. Григория Паламы* [The Anthropology of Saint Gregory Palamas] (Paris, 1950; repr. ed., Moscow, 1996); and "'Homotheos' et ses synonymes dans la littérature Byzantine", in *L'Église et les Églises*, vol. 2 (Chevetogne, 1955), pp. 15–28; Vladimir Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'orient* (Paris, 1944); Eng. trans., *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge and London, 1957; 3rd repr. ed., Crestwood, New York, 1991); "La théologie de la lumière chez saint Grégoire de Thessalonique", *Dieu Vivant* 1 (1945), 95–118; "Darkness and Light in the knowledge of God", in *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 8 (1950), 460–471; "Le problème de la «Vision face à face» et la tradition patristique de Byzance", *Studia Patristica*, vol. II (Papers presented to the Second International Conference on Patristic Studies held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1955, Part II), Berlin, 1957, 512–537; *Vision de Dieu* (Paris, 1962), Eng. trans. Asheleigh Moorhouse, *The Vision of God* (Leighton Buzzard, 1963); G. Arnakis, "Gregory Palamas among the Turks and Documents of his Captivity as Historical Sources", *Speculum* 26 (1951), 104–118; P. K. Chrestou's studies in Palamas and the Hesychast tradition (written between 1952 and 1969) collected and published in his *Θεολογικὰ Μελετήματα* [Theological Essays], vol. 3: *Νηπτικὰ καὶ Ἡσυχαστικά* [Neptic and Hesychastic], Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies (Thessalonica, 1977); Chrestou is also the general editor of the first critical edition of St. Gregory's complete works, in six volumes, five of which have been published (Thessalonica, 1962–1992); John Meyendorff, "Les débuts de la controverse hésychaste", *Byzantion* 23 (1953; published in 1954), 87–120; "Une lettre inédite de Grégoire Palamas à Akindynos", in *Θεολογία* 24 (1953), 557–582; "L'origine de la controverse hésychaste: la première lettre de Palamas à Akindynos, in *Θεολογία* 25 (1954), 602–613; and 26 (1955), 77–90; "Le thème du retour en soi dans la doctrine palamite du XIVe siècle", in *Revue d'histoire des religions* 145, no. 2 (1954), 188–206; "The doctrine of grace in St. Gregory Palamas", in *Saint Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 2, 2 (1954); Gk. trans. in *Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς* 37 (1954), 19–31; "Un mauvais théologien de l'unité: Barlaam le Calabrais", in *L'Église et les Églises*, vol. 2 (Chevetogne, 1955), pp. 47–64; "Note sur l'influence dionysienne en Orient", in *Studia Patristica*, vol. II (Papers presented to the Second International Conference on Patristic Studies held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1955, Part II), Berlin, 1957, 547–552; "Humanisme nominaliste et mystique chrétienne à Byzance au XIVe siècle", in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 79 (November, 1957), 905–914; *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas,* Patristica Sorbonensia 3 (Paris, 1959); abbreviated Eng. trans. George Lawrence, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (New York, 1964); the *Triads in Defence of the Holy Hesychasts* (Περὶ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχαζόντων), ed. with French trans., *Défense des saints hésychastes*, Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense 30–31 (Louvain, 1959); partial Eng. trans. N. Gendle, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York, 1983); *Saint Grégoire Palamas et la mystique orthodoxe* (Maîtres Spirituels [1959]; Eng. trans. Adele Fiske (New York, 1974); Theokletos (Monk of Dionysiou), "Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς" [Saint Gregory Palamas], in *Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς* 39 (1956), 104–110; and his book, *Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς· ὁ βίος καὶ ἡ θεολογία του* [Saint Gregory Palamas: His Life and Theology] (Thessalonica, 1976; 2nd repr. ed., 1984); George Habra, "The Source of the Doctrine of Gregory Palamas on the Divine Energies", *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 12 (1957–1958), 244–252, 294–303, 338–347; Fr. Georges Florovsky, "St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers", *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 5, 2 (1959–1960), 119–131, reprinted in his *Collected Works*, vol. I: *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont, MA, 1972), pp. 105–120; and "The Concept of Creation in Saint Athanasius", *Studia Patristica*, vol. VI, iv, ed. F. L. Cross (Berlin, 1962), 36–57, reproduced in *Aspects of Church History*, vol. IV in the *Collected Works* (1975), pp. 39–62; a detailed critique of Meyendorff's work by John S. Romanides, "Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics", *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 6 (1961–1962), 186–205; and 9 (1963–1964), 225–270; G. I. Mantzarides, *Παλαμικά* [Palamica] (Thessalonica, 1973), which incorporates articles on the person and teaching of St. Gregory written between the years 1963 and 1972; Eng. trans. Liadain Sherrard, *The Deification of Man: Saint Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (Crestwood, New York, 1984); *Μέθεξις Θεοῦ* [Participation in God] (Thessalonica, 1979), including material written between 1969 and 1975; Fr. Leon Contos, *The Concept of Theosis in Saint Gregory Palamas with Critical Text of the "Contra Akindynum"*, 2 vols. (University of California, Los Angeles, 1963), and "The Essence-Energies Structure of St. Gregory Palamas with Brief Examination of its Patristic Foundation", *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 12, 3 (1967), 283–294; Metropolitan Kallistos T. Ware, "Tradition and Personal Experience in Later Byzantine Theology", "Scholasticism and Orthodoxy: Theological Method as a Factor in the Schism", "God Hidden and Revealed: The Apophatic Way and the Essence-Energies Distinction", and "The Debate about Palamism", in *Eastern Churches Review* 3, 2 (1970), 131–141; 5, 1 (1973), 16–27; 7, 2 (1975), 125–136; and 9, 1–2 (1977), 45–63, respectively; "Silence in Prayer: The Meaning of Hesychia", in *Theology and Prayer*, ed. A. M. Allchin, Studies Supplementary to *Sobornost*, no. 3 (1975), pp. 8–28; also in *One Yet Two: Monastic Tradition East and West*, ed. M. Basil Pennington, Cistercian Studies 29 (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1976), pp. 22–47; and contributions to *The Study of Spirituality*, edd. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainright and Edward Yarnold (London, 1986), esp. "The Hesychasts: Gregory of Sinai, Gregory Palamas, Nicolas Cabasilas", pp. 242–255, and "The Hesychast Renaissance", pp. 255–258; A. Radovic, *Τὸ Μυστήριον τῆς Ἁγίας Τριάδος κατὰ τὸν Ἅγιον Γρηγόριον Παλαμᾶν* [The Mystery of the Holy Trinity in Saint Gregory Palamas] (Thessalonica, 1973); and Anestis Keselopoulos, *Πάθη καὶ Ἀρετὲς στὴ Διδασκαλία τοῦ Ἁγίου Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ* [Passions and Virtues in the Teaching of Saint Gregory Palamas] (Athens, 1982).

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10. See my Notes to the Homilies, nn. 100, 103, 149, 218 and 515.

11. The prime example being his *Triads*, see Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ· Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1 (Thessalonica, 1962), pp. 359–694; Gendle's partial trans., *loc. cit.; The Philokalia, op. cit.*, vol. 4 (1995), pp. 331–342, which contains the second part of the first Triad.

12. See PG 150: 996–1040, taken from Conrad Janning's *Encomium, Auctore Gregorio Palama Archiepiscopo Thessalonicensi*, in the Bollandists' *Acta Sanctorum Junii*, tomus II, 12 die (Antwerp, 1698), pp. 538–556, which itself was based on the Codex Parisinus graecus 1239; and Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 5 (1992), pp. 161–191; and see *ibid.*, p. 152, n. 3. The *Encomium* was published with corrections (and an accompanying Modern Greek translation) by Stavroniketa Monastery, Mount Athos, in 1991, and entitled *Λόγος εἰς τὸν βίον τοῦ ὁσίου Πέτρου τοῦ Ἀθωνίτου* [Oration on the Life of Saint Peter the Athonite]; a full critical edition was published by Chrestou in his *Συγγράμματα, op. cit.*, pp. 161–191 in

1992, and again in 1994 (with an accompanying Modern Greek translation) in his *Ἅπαντα*, vol. 8 (no. 121), *op. cit.*, pp. 274–345.

13. Both the *Address to the Nun Xenia* and the *Decalogue* were published for the first time in the *Φιλοκαλία τῶν ἱερῶν νηπτικῶν, op. cit.*, pp. 929–954, and 296–300; and reproduced in Migne's PG 150, cols. 1044–1088 and 1089–1101; Eng. trans., *The Philokalia, op. cit.*, pp. 293–322, and 323–330, respectively. An earlier English translation of *A New Testament Decalogue* had been published by S. A. Mousalimas, in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 25 (1980), 297–305.

14. In later homiliaries, called "panegyrica" (πανηγυρικά), sermons by St. Gregory either supplemented or even displaced those of earlier great Fathers of the Church (Yiangou, *op. cit.*, 29); the most characteristic example of this phenomenon being that of his homily on the Entry of the Theotokos (Hom. LIII).

15. See *e.g.* Homs. XVII, 2, n. 233, XXXIII, 3, n. 490; *cf.* Hom. XI, 21, n. 158.

16. See *e.g.* his *Catechetical Sermons* V, 3: Eng. trans. C. J. deCatanzaro, *Discourses,* Classics of Western Spirituality (New York and London, 1980), pp. 93–94; and his *Chapters* III, 65; trans. P. McGuckin, *The Practical and Theological Chapters, The Three Theological Discourses,* Cistercian Studies Series 41 (Kalamazoo, 1982), p. 91.

17. See Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ· Ἅπαντα τὰ Ἔργα, op. cit.*, vol. 9 (1985), pp. 11–12.

18. See n. 1, in my Notes to the Homilies. His achievements during this period appear all the more remarkable when one also considers the fact that in 1354 Palamas was captured by the Turks and held hostage for more than a year.

19. See St. Philotheus Kokkinos, in Tsames, *op. cit.*, 36–37, pp. 467–468.

20. *Ibid.*, and see n. 12 above. Chrestou suggests (in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ· Συγγράμματα*, vol. 5, p. 127) that the most likely reason for St. Gregory choosing to write first about St. Peter is the chronological proximity of St. Gregory's vision – which must have taken place some time after Pascha of 1334 – to the feastday for St. Peter the Athonite, that is, to 12 June.

21. And therefore not included in the present edition. Although, as the manuscript tradition shows (*e.g.* Coislinianus graecus 97 fols. 193r-202v, and Iviron 266 fols. 254v-267v, both of the fourteenth century) it was appended to the homilies as a separate treatise.

22. Since St. Gregory did not take up his see until late December of 1350 or early January of 1351, see nn. 1 and 376 in my Notes to the Homilies, and Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ· Ἅπαντα τὰ Ἔργα, op. cit.*, pp. 12–13.

23. See Tsames, *Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἐν ἁγίοις πατέρα ἡμῶν Γρηγόριον Ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Θεσσαλονίκης, op. cit.*, 97, ll. 1–3, p. 133; and PG 151:624CD (Φροντιστήριον

ἐστι μοναζουσῶν μέγα καὶ πολυάνθρωπον ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ, βασιλικὸν καὶ δι᾽ αὐτὸ τοῦτ᾽, οἶμαι, καλούμενον); and Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, pp. 10; *cf.* Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 393.

24. See Tsames, *op. cit.*, 97, ll. 19–21, p. 134; and PG 151:625A; and Chrestou, *ibid.*, vol. 10, *Ἕλληνες Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας* 76 (Thessalonica, 1985), p. 20. For more details on the Basilikon Monastery (τὸ βασιλικὸν μοναστήριον τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης), see P. Magdalino, "Some additions and corrections to the List of Byzantine churches and monasteries in Thessalonica", in *Revue des Études Byzantines* 35 (1977), 277–279; found in Tsames, *op. cit.*, p. 133, n. 411.

25. See Hom. L, 9; and Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 394; Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 10.

26. See nn. 1 and 1205 in my Notes to the Homilies.

27. Chrestou points out (*ibid*, pp. 7–8, n. 3) that St. Gregory did not in fact preach on a daily basis. This is clear from the phrase "as the occasion allows" or "given the opportunity" (καιροῦ διδόντος), in Hom. XXXIII, 2; *cf.* Meyendorff, *loc. cit.*). Indeed, he was not infrequently obstructed from doing so by various disruptive events in his life (see *e.g.* n. 18 above), as well as for reasons of ill health.

28. Meyendorff, *ibid.*, pp. 392–394; Chrestou, *op. cit.*, pp. 9–13.

29. For a list of these, see A. Ehrhard's *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen Literatur der Griechischen Kirche von den Anfängen bis zu Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts, Erster Teil: Die Überlieferung, III. Band, 1: Lieferung* (= *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur,* 52, 1), Leipzig, 1939, pp. 698–702.

30. Based on Mosquensis Synodicus 212, of the 14th century, see *e.g.* Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 392, and Chrestou, in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ· Συγγράμματα*, vol. 5, p. 153; and *cf.* Ehrhard, *op. cit.*, p. 701, who dates this MS back to the 15th century. The following is the order in which the ten homilies in question appear in von Matthaei's edition, numbered, however, according to the later editions of Kleopa (Jerusalem, 1857) and Oikonomos (Athens, 1861): Hom. XLVI, *On the Gospel for the Third Sunday of Luke on the Subject of the Widow's Child Resurrected by the Lord,* Hom. VI, *To Encourage Fasting,* Hom. XI, *On the Precious and Life-giving Cross,* Hom. XLIX, *On the Great-martyr Demetrius,* Hom. XII, *On the Fourth Sunday of Holy Lent,* Hom. XIV, *On the Annunciation,* Hom. XXVI, *Delivered at Harvest Time,* Hom. XV, *Delivered on Palm Sunday,* Hom. XX, *On the Eighth Matins Gospel of John the Evangelist,* and Hom. XXVIII, *On SS. Peter and Paul.*

31. Based on Codex Hierosolymitanus s. Crucis 22; found in Ehrhard, *op. cit.*, p. 695, n. 2, and p. 701.

32. Based on Panteleimon 215 (15th cent.); Ehrhard, *ibid.*, p. 695, n. 2, and p. 700.

33. Hom. I was not included in Ehrhard's list (*op. cit.*, p. 698, n. 1), probably because he regarded it more as an "enthronement address" than a homily *per se* (see my Notes to the Homilies, n. 1; and Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 391). Ehrhard also excludes Hom. LXIII from his list, probably because it is absent from the earliest 14th century MSS (Coislinianus graecus 97, Mosquensis Synodicus 212, Sinaïticus graecus 1604, Lavra 1483, Vatopedi 134). It is, however, present in MSS of the 15th century, among St. Gregory's spiritual works, after his exhortation *To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia* (Parisinus graecus 1239, fols. 281–285v; Sinaïticus graecus 1851, fols. 325v-329; Panteleimon 215, fols. 678–687; Atheniensis 2715, fols. 221v-225); see Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 392; and Chrestou, *op. cit.*, p. 12; and *cf.* Ehrhard's list, *op. cit.*, pp. 698–702.

34. The current edition began in the form of a prospective three-volume series, only two of which were published as *The Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas*, edited with an introduction and notes by Christopher Veniamin, vol. I: Homs. I – XXI (2002), vol. II: Homs. XXII – XLII (2004), South Canaan, PA: Saint Tikhon's Seminary Press. A parallel series of the homilies, *Sermons by Saint Gregory Palamas*, arranged thematically and intended for a more popular readership, has also appeared in recent years, published by Mount Thabor Publishing, 2005– 2013.

35. In addition to the Modern Greek translation of Chrestou, so far as I am aware, full translations of St. Gregory's homilies, to date, exist in Russian, see Archimandrite Amvrosii (Pogodin), *Песѣды (Омиліи) иже во святых отца нашего Григорія архіепископа Фессалоникійскаго Паламы* [The Dialogues (Homilies) of our Father among the saints Gregory Palamas Archbishop of Thessalonica], in 3 vols. (vol. 1: Montreal, 1965, repr. ed., Moscow, 1993; vol. 2: Montreal, 1975; vol. 3: Moscow, 1994); and in Romanian, see *Sfantul Grigorie Palama: Omilii* [Saint Gregory Palamas: The Homilies] (Bucharest, 2000), trans. Constantine Daniel, edited with revisions by Laura Patrascu and Razvan Codrescu. Also, there exists a limited French translation of twelve homilies, by Jérôme Cler, *Grégoire Palamas: Douze Homélies pour Les Fêtes*, with an introduction (Paris, 1987); these latter are respectively: Hom. LVI, *On the Holy and Dread Mysteries of Christ*, Hom. LVIII, *On the Saving Nativity according to the Flesh of Our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ*, Hom. LIX, *About what is accomplished in Holy Baptism*, Hom. LX, *On the Holy Feast of Theophany*, Hom. XIV, *On the Annunciation*, Hom. XI, *On the Precious and Life-giving Cross*, Hom. XVI, *About the Dispensation of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to the Flesh*, Hom. XVIII, *On the Sunday of the Myrrhbearers*, Hom. XXI, *On the Ascension*, Hom. XXIV, *On Pentecost*, and Homs. XXXIV and XXV, *On the Transfiguration*.

HOMILY ONE

On Peace With One Another

DELIVERED THREE DAYS AFTER HIS ARRIVAL IN THESSALONICA[1]

WE ARE ALL BRETHREN in that we have one Creator and Lord, who is Father to us all.[2] That brotherhood we share with animals and inanimate nature. We are also brethren one to another as descendants of one earthly father, Adam, and the only creatures made in God's image. But even this is common to all nations. More especially, however, we are brethren in that we are of the same race and live in the same place; and above all else, share one mother, the Holy Church and true piety, the author and finisher of which is Christ, the rightful Son of God. Not only is He our God, but He was well-pleased to be our Brother, our Father and our Head, bringing us all together into one body and making us members of one another and of Himself.

2. When Christ rose from the dead on the third day and appeared to the women who came to the tomb He said, "Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me" (Matt. 28:10). Do you see how He deigns to be called our brother? Just as the apostle said of Him, "He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:16–17). Christ is also our Father because He gave us new birth through holy baptism and His divine grace. He calls His disciples His children and when He comes to His saving passion He promises not to leave them orphans. Again the apostle says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that

through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). Paul confirms that we are all one body in Christ by saying, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and individually members of it" (1 Cor. 12:27). As a single body has many members, and as many members as there are, they form a single body, so it is with Christ. For truly we were all baptized in the one Spirit into the one body.

3. We have one baptism, brethren, for regeneration and divine birth, one faith, one hope, one God, who is above all and through all and in us all. In His love He gathers us together to Himself and makes us members of one another and of Himself. But by the devil's cooperation hatred towards one another entered in, forcing out love, or rather, it entered in not once but many times, breaking up the unity that was ours in our love for one another and for God. This hatred not only paralyses the city by dividing its inhabitants, but it has also ranged them in warring factions and stirs up civil revolts, irreparable disorder and troubles. It makes fellow-countrymen into antagonists and renders our city like one taken by the enemy. Hatred stirs it up piteously against itself, deceiving it into making war on itself, until this accursed discord turns it into a grim riddle.

4. Who were those men who ran around the city, sometimes destroying houses and looting their contents, tracking down householders in a great frenzy, wanting to murder them without mercy or humanity? Were they not inhabitants of this city? Who were the victims of such frenzy, uproar, violence and persecution? Were not they too inhabitants of the city, men from whom it had sometimes received great benefits? What suffering! What great wretchedness! The city fights against itself, it becomes its own enemy. Its own feet pursue it, its own hands demolish it, its own voice clamours against it. Better men cringe with fear while the ignoble and inferior take control. Surely this commonly occurring sickness is much worse than the sickness of those paralysed men mentioned in the Gospel,[3] as evil-doing is worse and more harmful than idleness.

5. But do not feel annoyed when you hear these things. I do not say them to reproach you, but so that now you recognize the sickness, being sober and free of it, you may search out the reason you succumbed to it, long to be healed and make haste to attain and keep this healing, which is God's gift. He will also give you strength, as He did to those paralysed men. For He not only healed them but granted

each of them strength to pick up the bed on which he was lying and to walk without stumbling.

6. What was to blame for the sickness of those paralysed men who were healed? There were two such men: one was lying beside the pool of Siloam in Jerusalem (John 5:2–15),[4] the other was carried by four men in Capernaum (Matt. 9:1–8, Mark 2:1–12). What was to blame for their sickness? Sin. The Lord made this clear by saying to one of them, when He saw his faith before his body was healed, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee" (Matt. 9:2). To the other, when He found him after he had been healed, the Lord said, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14). In their case their sin put their health to flight and made them paralysed. In your case the sin you all share put love to flight and made you enemies of one another. For how else did you lose the common bond of love towards God and each other, except that your minds were enamoured of sin? The Lord said in the Gospels, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold" (Matt. 24:12). Once love has grown completely cold, it is impossible for God's grace and care to remain.

7. I shall give you an illustration of how this passion works. Our soul is like a lamp with good works for oil. Instead of a wick it holds love, upon which rests, not light, but the grace of the divine Spirit. When the oil of good works fails, the wick of love in the soul must grow cold. So the light of God's care and love departs from those who leave virtue and put love to flight. God has turned His face from them and they are stirred up against one another. As David said, "Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled" (Ps. 104:29). Civil revolt and disorder befall us because of sin. They bring in all kinds of evil and give the prince of evil a home in the leaders of the revolt and their followers. He establishes himself within them and turns them into wild beasts. It is no exaggeration to say that he prepares them to acquire the character of demons. He who from the beginning was a murderer and hated men, now makes men murderers, antagonists to Christ, the giver of life, and, to an even greater extent, disobedient and hostile to earthly kings and their spiritual father, shepherd and teacher.

8. Turn back now to the way of Christ's gospel and hold to it firmly, that your unity with one another may be ever flourishing and unbroken. Then the Lord will turn back to you and rest upon you in peace and the grace of the divine Spirit. As the paralysed man in

Jerusalem continued to lie beside the pool of Siloam which healed the sick, so you have not completely withdrawn from the Church of Christ which bestows peace. But as the paralysed man had no one to help him towards the grace from that pool, so you here in this place had no shepherd to preach peace, to gather the scattered members and bind them together, or to cast out from the body of Christ's Church the sickness and weakness which come from hatred.

9. Now we have come to stand with you in Christ. We are ambassadors for Christ, as though He did beseech you by us. Be reconciled with God. Recognize the ties of kinship between you, not only the spiritual ties but the physical ones going back to your forefathers. Call to mind the former days of peace. How many good things peace brought you, all now lost. Do not take account of evil, do not wish to repay evil with evil, but overcome evil with good. Embrace love to one another so you may attain the love that comes from God and show love towards Him. For it is impossible for those who do not love their own brethren to have love towards God or to enjoy His grace and care (*cf.* 1 John 3:17; 4:20).

10. Brethren, obey me as I come to you now and preach peace above all and towards all, according to the Lord's commandment. Share in this work by forgiving one another, if anyone has cause for complaint against another, as Christ forgave us, that you may become sons of peace, sons of God. He is your peace "who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition" (Eph. 2:14), abolishing enmity by His Cross. He said to His disciples, and through them to us, "into whatever town or house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house" (Luke 10:5). The whole work of His coming is peace, for this He bowed the heavens and came down. David foretold of Him, "In his days shall righteousness flourish and abundance of peace" (Ps. 72:7). Again in another Psalm he said of Him, "For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints, and to those who turn to him in their hearts" (Ps. 85:8).

11. Even the hymn sung by the angels at His birth shows that He came to us from heaven bringing peace: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). When He was completing the plan for our salvation, He left peace to His friends instead of an inheritance, telling them, "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John 14:27). He also said, "Have peace with one another and with all men" (*cf.* Mark 9:50), and, "By this shall

all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love for one another" (John 13:35). The last prayer He gave us when He ascended to His Father establishes our love for one another: "Grant them that they may all be one" (John 17:21).

12. May we not fall away from this fatherly prayer or reject our inheritance from the heavenly Father, the seal and sign of our kinship with Him. Otherwise we may also reject our sonship, our blessedness and our discipleship, and fall away from the life we have been promised. We may be shut out of the spiritual bridechamber and hear from the Father, the author of peace: "I know ye not. Depart from me, ye who are guilty of hatred, enmity and scandals" (*cf.* Matt. 7:23). That this might not befall us, He sent peace into all the world through His disciples and apostles.

13. For this reason they put peace at the beginning of their homilies and writings, saying by way of a preface, "Grace to you and peace from God". We too, as servants of their ministry, now come to you bringing peace. With Paul we say to you, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). If without peace with all men no one will see God, how will he who does not live in peace with his fellow-countrymen see God in the age to come? How can he avoid hearing, "Let him disappear, that he see not the glory of the Lord" (Isa. 26:10)? May none of us hear those accursed words, but let us all be reconciled and gathered into one in peace, love and concord with our Lord Jesus Christ in our midst, according to His sweet promise. He makes the difficulty of this present life easy for us and, when the right time comes, He will bestow on us eternal life, glory and the kingdom.

14. May we all attain to this by the grace and loving kindness of our Lord and God Jesus Christ, the giver of peace, to whom be glory, might, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages. Amen.

HOMILY TWO

On the Lord's Parable Of the Publican and the Pharisee[5]

THE UNSEEN PATRON OF EVIL is full of evil ingenuity. Right at the beginning he can drag away, by means of hopelessness and lack of faith, the foundations of virtue already laid in the soul. Again, by means of indifference and laziness,[6] he can make an attempt on the walls of virtue's house just when they are being built up. Or he can bring down the roof of good works after its construction, by means of pride and madness. But stand firm, do not be alarmed, for a diligent man is even more ingenious in good things, and virtue has superior forces to deploy against evil. It has at its disposal supplies and support in battle from Him who is all-powerful, who in His goodness strengthens all lovers of virtue. So not only can virtue remain unshaken by the various wicked devices prepared by the enemy, but it can also lift up and restore those fallen into the depths of evil, and easily lead them to God by repentance and humility.

2. Here is an example and a clear proof. The publican, as a publican, dwells in the depths of sin. All he has in common with those who live virtuously is one short utterance, but he finds relief, is lifted up and rises above every evil. He is numbered with the company of the righteous, justified by the impartial Judge Himself. If the Pharisee is condemned by his speech, it is because, as a Pharisee, he thinks himself somebody, although he is not really righteous, and utters many arrogant words which provoke God's anger with their every syllable.

3. Why does humility lead up to the heights of righteousness, whereas self-conceit leads down to the depths of sin? Because

anybody who thinks he is something great, even before God, is rightly abandoned by God, as one who thinks that he does not need His help. Anybody who despises himself, on the other hand, and relies on mercy from above, wins God's sympathy, help and grace. As it says, "The Lord resisteth the proud: but he giveth grace unto the lowly" (Prov. 3:34 LXX).

4. The Lord demonstrates this in a parable, saying, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican" (Luke 18:10). Wanting to set clearly before us the gain that comes from humility and the loss from pride, he divided into two groups all who went to the Temple, or, rather, those who went up into the Temple, who are the ones who go there to pray. This is the nature of prayer, it brings a man up from the earth into heaven and, rising above every heavenly name, height and honour, sets him before the God who is over all (*cf.* Rom. 9:5). The ancient Temple was set in a high place, on a hill above the city.[7] Once when a deadly epidemic was destroying Jerusalem, David saw the Angel of Death on this hill, stretching out his sword against the city. He went up there and built an altar to the Lord, on which he offered a sacrifice to God, and the destruction ceased (2 Sam. 24:15–25).[8] All these things are an image of the saving ascent of the spirit during holy prayer and of the forgiveness it brings – for these things all foreshadowed our salvation. They can also be an image of this holy Church of ours, which is indeed set in a high place, in another angelic country above the world, where the great, bloodless sacrifice, acceptable to God, is offered for the forgiveness of the whole world, the destruction of death and abundance of eternal life.

5. So the Lord did not say, "Two men went to the temple", but "went up" into the Temple. Even now there are some who come to the holy church without going up. Instead they bring down the church, the image of heaven. They come for the sake of meeting each other and talking, or to buy and sell goods, and they resemble each other, for the latter offer goods, the former words, and all receive a fair exchange. As in those days the Lord drove them completely out of the Temple saying, "My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. 21:13), so He also drove them away from their conversations as they did not really go up into the Temple at all, even if they came there every day.

6. The Pharisee and the publican went up into the Temple, both with the aim of praying. But the Pharisee brought himself down after going up, defeating his aim by the way he prayed. Both had the same aim in going up, both went up to pray, but they prayed in opposite ways. One made the ascent broken and contrite, for he had learned from the psalmist and prophet that "a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17). The prophet says of himself, with the knowledge of experience, "I was brought low and the Lord helped me" (Ps. 116:6). But why am I talking about the prophet, when the God of the prophets, who for our sake became like us, humbled himself. "Wherefore", as the apostle says, "God hath highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9). The Pharisee, by contrast, goes up bloated with pretensions to justify himself in the presence of God, although all our righteousness is like a filthy rag before Him (*cf.* Isa. 64:6). He had not heard the saying, "Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 16:5), or, "God resisteth the proud" (Prov. 3:34 LXX), or, "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (Isa. 5:21).

7. The two were different not only in their manner and way of praying but also in their type of prayer, for there are two kinds. Prayer is not only a matter of entreaty but also of thanksgiving. Of those who pray, one goes up to the Temple of God praising and thanking God for what he has received from him. Another asks for what he has not yet received, including, in the case of those of us who sin all the time, remission of sins. When we piously promise to offer something to God, that is not called prayer but a vow, as shown by the one who said, "Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God" (Ps. 76:11), and the other who said, "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Eccles. 5:4).

8. However, these two kinds of prayer can both be unprofitable for the unwary. Faith and contrition make prayer and supplication for the remission of sins effective, once evil deeds have been renounced, but despair and hardness of heart make it ineffectual. Thanksgiving for the benefits received from God is made acceptable by humility and not looking down on those who lack them. It is rendered unacceptable, however, by being conceited, as if those benefits resulted from our own efforts and knowledge, and by condemning those who have not received them. The Pharisee's behaviour and words prove he was afflicted with both these diseases. He went up to the Temple to give

thanks, not to make supplication and, like a wretched fool, mingled conceit and condemnation of others with his thanksgiving. For he stood and prayed thus with himself: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers" (Luke 18:11).

9. Instead of the attitude of a servant, the Pharisee's stance displays shameless self-exaltation, the opposite of that other man who, in his humility, did not dare to lift up his eyes to heaven. It stands to reason that the Pharisee prayed to himself, for his prayer did not ascend to God, although it did not escape the notice of Him who sits upon the cherubim and observes the lowest depths of the abyss. When he said "I thank thee", he did not go on to say, "because in Thy mercy Thou didst freely deliver me, weak and unable to fight as I am, from the snares of the devil". For he is spiritually courageous who manages to take refuge in repentance when caught in the snares of the enemy and fallen into the nets of sin. The circumstances of our lives are directed by a higher providence and often, with little or no effort on our part, by God's help we have stayed out of reach of many great passions, delivered by His sympathy for our weakness. We should acknowledge the gift and humble ourselves before the giver, not be conceited.

10. The Pharisee says, "I thank thee, God", not because I have received any help from Thee, but "because I am not as other men are". As though it was from his own resources and through his own ability that he was not an extortioner or unjust or an adulterer – if, indeed, he really was not. He did not pay attention to himself, or he would not have said he was righteous. He was looking more at everyone else than at himself and, in his madness, despised them all. Only one seemed to him to be righteous and chaste: himself. "I am not", he says, "as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican" (Luke 18:11). Anyone could point out to him how foolish he was, by saying to him, "If all except yourself are unjust and extortioners, then who are the victims of extortion and injustice? What about this publican, and the extra words you added about him? Since he is one of the rest, surely he was included in your general, your universal, condemnation? Or did he have to be condemned twice over because he was in your sight, even though he was standing far away from you. You knew he was unjust because he was obviously a publican, but how did you know he was an adulterer? Or perhaps you are entitled to treat him unjustly and insult him since he treated others unjustly?" But it is not so. With a humble mind he bears your

arrogant accusation and, reproaching himself, he offers supplication to God and is delivered by Him from the condemnation of having treated others unjustly. You, however, will be rightly condemned for having arrogantly made accusations against him and all men, and deemed only yourself righteous. "I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers."

11. These words show the Pharisee's disdain for God and for everybody, but also for the standards of his own conscience. He openly despises everybody and ascribes his abstention from evil not to God's strength but to his own. If he says that he thanks God, it is only because he considers all men apart from himself to be licentious, unjust and extortioners, as though God saw fit to grant virtue to him alone. However, if everyone were like that, all the Pharisee's goods would be in their possession as loot. But this is not so, for he adds, "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I gain" (Luke 18:12).[9] He does not say that he gives tithes of all that he possesses, but of all that he gains, meaning the additions and increases to his fortune. So he kept what he possessed and also took without hindrance as much as he could over and above that. How could all except himself be extortioners and unjust? This is how self-confuting and self-deceiving evil is! Madness is always mixed with lies.

12. He put forward the fact that he gave tithes of his wealth to prove his righteousness; for if someone gives tithes of his own wealth how can he be an extortioner of other people's? He put forward fasting to show off his chastity because fasting gives rise to purity. For argument's sake, then, let us say you are chaste, righteous, wise, sensible, brave, and whatever else you wish. If this has come from yourself and not from God, why do you deceitfully pretend to pray? Why do you go up into the Temple and give thanks in vain? But if it has come from God, you did not receive it so as to boast but for the edification of others to the glory of the Giver. You should have humbly rejoiced and given thanks both to Him who gave and to those for whose sake the gifts were given. The lamp receives light for those who see it, not for itself. For "week" the Pharisee uses the word "sabbath", but he means not the seventh day but the seven days, on two of which he brags that he fasts. He is unaware that such fasts are mere human virtues, whereas pride is demonic. When pride is linked with fasting, however genuine, it annuls and destroys the virtues, and how much more so if the fasting is a sham.

13. These are the words of the Pharisee. By contrast, the publican "standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). See the extent of his humility, faith and self-reproach. See the utter abasement of his thoughts and feelings, and, at the same time, contrition of heart mingled with this publican's prayer. When he went up into the Temple to pray for the remission of his sins, he brought with him good advocates before God: unashamed faith, uncondemned self-reproach, contrition of heart that is not despised and humility that exalts. He linked attention to prayer most excellently. It says, "The publican standing afar off". Not "stood", as in the case of the Pharisee, but "standing", to show that he was standing for a long time continuously praying and asking for mercy. Without any other intention or thought he paid attention only to himself and God, turning over and repeating the supplication of a single thought,[10] the most effective of all prayers.

14. "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven" (Luke 18:13). As he stood he bowed down, and his bearing was not only that of a lowly servant, but also of a condemned man. It also proclaims a soul delivered from sin. Although still far from God, without the boldness towards Him that comes from good works, it hopes to draw near to him because it has already renounced evil and is intent on good. "Standing afar off the publican would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven", showing his self-condemnation[11] and self-reproach[12] by his manner and appearance. He saw himself as unworthy either of heaven or of the earthly Temple, so he stood on the threshold of the Temple, not daring even to turn his gaze towards heaven, still less towards the God of heaven. In his intense contrition he smote upon his breast to show he was worthy of punishment. He sighed in deepest mourning,[13] bowing his head like a condemned man, calling himself a sinner and begging with faith for forgiveness, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner". For he believed Him who said, "Turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you" (Zech. 1:3), and the prophet who bore witness, "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my heart" (*cf.* Ps. 32:5).

15. What happened then? "This man", says the Lord, "went down to his house justified rather than the other, for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"

(Luke 18:14). As the devil is conceit itself and pride is his own particular evil, it defeats and swallows up any human virtue with which it is mixed. Whereas humility is the virtue of the good angels, and defeats any human evil that comes upon fallen mankind. Humility is the chariot by which we ascend to God, like those clouds which are to carry up to God those who would dwell for endless ages with Him, as foretold by the apostle: "We shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17). Humility is the same as such a cloud. It is formed by repentance, releases streams of tears; brings out the worthy from among the unworthy and leads them up to unite them with God, justified by His free gift for the gratitude of their free disposition.[14]

16. At first the publican evilly appropriated other people's goods; later he renounced dishonesty and by not justifying himself, was justified. The Pharisee did not lay claim to other people's possessions, but by justifying himself he was condemned. What will befall those who do lay claim to other people's possessions and attempt to justify themselves?

17. Let us leave them, as the Lord does, for words will not convince such people. Sometimes it happens that we humble ourselves when we pray, and we may imagine that we shall be rewarded with the same justification as the publican. But it is not so. We must consider the fact that the publican was despised by the Pharisee to his face, even after he had abandoned sin, and he condemned himself with contempt, not only not contradicting the Pharisee but joining in with his accusations against him.

18. When you abandon your evildoing, do not contradict those who despise or reproach you because of it. Join them in condemning yourself for what you are like and, through contrite prayer, take refuge in the forgiveness of God alone, realizing that you are a rescued publican. Many have called themselves sinners, and so do we, but dishonour tests the heart. The great Paul is far removed from pharisaic boasting, but he wrote to those in Corinth who were speaking in tongues, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all" (1 Cor. 14:18). (He who elsewhere calls himself the offscouring of all things, writes these words to restrain those who look down on those who did not have this gift, *cf.* 1 Cor. 4:13.) If therefore Paul, who is far removed from pharisaic boasting, can write such words, it is also possible for someone to say the same words as the publican and be humble in speech like him, but not to be justified as he was.

To the publican's words must be added his renunciation of evil, his soul's disposition, his contrition and his patience. David shows us by his actions that anyone who considers himself guilty before God and repents must believe that the reproach and contempt of others towards him is just and to be endured. After he had sinned, when he heard Shimei[15] speaking ill of him, he said to those who wanted to retaliate, "Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David" (2 Sam. 16:10). According to him, God's forgiveness of David's sin against him had posted the man there. Yet David was struggling at that time with a great and terrible calamity, as Absalom had just risen up in revolt against him (2 Sam. 15:7ff).

19. Leaving Jerusalem against his will and with unbearable grief, he fled as far as the foot of the Mount of Olives. There, to make the calamity worse, he met Shimei throwing stones at him, cursing him mercilessly and insulting him shamelessly (2 Sam. 16:5ff). He called him a bloodthirsty man and a criminal, as if to remind the king, to his disgrace, of the incident with Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam. 11:3–15). He did not stop after cursing him once or twice and throwing a few stones, and words that strike harder than stones. It says the king with all his men went on with Shimei going along the mountainside following the king, cursing him, throwing stones from the side and spattering him with mud. The king did not lack men to stop him. Abishai, his commander, unable to endure it, said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord and king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head" (2 Sam. 16:9). But David restrained him and all his servants, saying to them, "Let him curse. It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day" (2 Sam. 16:12).

20. The happenings which took place in those days are shown in the parable of the publican and the Pharisee, fulfilled for ever by righteousness. If someone really accounts himself guilty of eternal punishment, he will courageously endure not just dishonour but also harm, disease and, in fact, every kind of misfortune and ill-treatment. He who shows such patience, as though in debt and guilty, is delivered by a very light condemnation, temporary and ephemeral, from truly grievous, unbearable and unending punishment.[16] Sometimes he may even be delivered from dangers threatening him now, because God's kindness begins from that point, due to his patience. Someone

chastened by God said, "I will bear the chastening of the Lord, because I have sinned against him" (*cf.* Micah 7:9 LXX).[17]

21. May we, chastened not by the Lord's wrath and anger but by His mercy, not be cast down by God's punishment, but like the psalmist may we be raised up at the end by the grace and love towards mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, might, honour and worship, together with the Father and the life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY THREE

On the Lord's Parable Of the Prodigal Who Was Saved[18]

"BEHOLD THE DAYS COME, that there will be famine", says the prophet as he weeps for Jerusalem, "not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord" (Amos 8:11). Famine means being deprived of and desiring necessary food. But there is something worse and more wretched than this famine: when someone is deprived of the necessary means of salvation and does not perceive his misfortune, having no desire to be saved. Someone who is hungry and in need goes round searching everywhere for a crust of bread. If he finds some mouldy barley bread, or someone offers him bread made from millet or husks, or any other lowly kind of food, his joy equals his former anguish when he could not find anything. The person suffering from spiritual famine, being deprived of and desiring spiritual nourishment, goes round searching for someone with God's gift of teaching.[19] If he finds someone, he joyfully feeds on the bread of spiritual life, the word of salvation, which nobody who keeps searching to the end fails to find. As Christ says, "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Luke 11:10).

2. Some people, because their minds have gone so long without nourishment, lose their desire to eat and so do not notice the harm they are suffering. If they have a teacher it annoys them to listen to him. If they do not, they do not look for someone to instruct them, and live more sinfully than the prodigal. Although by going away he deprived himself of the Provider, Father and Lord of us all, when

he was caught in a terrible famine and perceived his deprivation, he repented, went back, searched and found again the divine and undefiled nourishment. Through repentance he benefited so greatly from the gifts of the Spirit that he was envied for his riches.

3. But let us go back to the beginning and expound to you in your charity this parable of the Lord in the Gospel, as it is customary to read it in church today.[20]

4. "A certain man", it says, "had two sons" (Luke 15:11). Here in the parable the Lord calls Himself a man. There is nothing strange in this. If He truly became man for our salvation, it is not at all strange if He presents Himself as one particular man for our benefit. He is the eternal Guardian of our souls and bodies, of which He is Creator and Lord, and He has shown surpassing love and care towards us in His works, even before we came into being.

5. Before we existed, from the foundation of the world, He prepared a kingdom for us to inherit, as He tells us Himself (Matt. 25:34). Before we existed for our sake he made the angels ministering spirits, as Paul says, "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14).[21] Before we existed for our sake he stretched out the heavens over the whole visible world, as if putting up a tent for us without distinction in this transitory life. The heavens themselves are perpetually in motion, full of movement and unmoving. Unmoving in that they do not suddenly change and bring destruction on the inhabitants of the earth. Full of movement because they are held in place by counterbalancing movements.[22] Perpetually in motion as they carry with them the multitude of stars in set order,[23] that we might learn how transitory our life is, and also enjoy all the heavenly bodies in turn as they pass above our heads. Before we existed for our sake He made the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night (Gen. 1:16). He set them and the stars in the firmament of heaven to move in the same and in the opposite direction, existing together and differing from one another in their various kinds, that they might be for signs both for seasons and for years. None of these signs are necessary to the spiritual creation, which is above the senses, or to the animals, which live by their senses alone. They were made for us, who by our senses enjoy the other benefits of the visible world as well as its beauty, while in our minds we can apprehend the signs we see.

6. For our sake before we existed He laid the foundations of the earth, spread out the sea upon them, poured out air in abundance

over everything and above the air kindled fire in His wisdom, that the excessive cold of what lay below might be tempered by having fire all around, while the fire's own excessive heat would be contained in one place. If all this was also necessary for the animals to survive, yet they too were made, before we existed, for the service of man, as the prophet David sings in the Psalms (Ps. 104:14).

7. To sustain our bodies our Creator brought this whole world out of nothing before He created us. But to improve our ways and lead us towards virtue there is nothing our benevolent Lord did not do. He made all the visible world like a mirror of heavenly things, so that by contemplating it spiritually we might attain to them as by a marvellous ladder. He put in each of us a natural law,[24] our own conscience, as a steady plumbline, an upright judge and an unerring teacher. If we concentrate our minds within ourselves, we will need no other teacher to understand what is good. If, through our senses, we rightly turn our mind[25] outside ourselves, "the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made", as the apostle says (Rom. 1:20).[26]

8. When, by means of nature and creation, He had opened the school of virtues, he appointed guardian angels over us, raised up fathers and prophets as our guides and showed signs and wonders to lead us to faith. He gave us the written law to assist the law implanted in our reasonable nature and the teaching given by creation.[27] In the end, as we treated everything with scorn – how great is our laziness, and what a contrast with the long-suffering and care of Him who loves us! – He gave Himself to us for our sake. Emptying the riches of the Godhead into our lowest depths, he took our nature and, becoming a man like us, was called our teacher. He Himself teaches us about His great love for mankind, demonstrating it by word and deed, while at the same time leading his followers to imitate His compassion and turn away from hardness of heart.

9. Tender love is found in people who have things in their care, so shepherds love their sheep and owners love their property. Since, however, such love is greater between those linked by blood and kinship, and greatest of all between fathers and their own children, the Lord uses these latter to demonstrate His own love for mankind, calling Himself a man and the father of us all. For He was made a man for our sake and gave us new birth through holy baptism and the accompanying grace of the Holy Spirit.

10. "A certain man", it says, "had two sons". For the difference in minds divided[28] a single nature into two, and the distinction between good and evil gathered many people into two. We sometimes say something is twofold when it has two different modes of conduct, even though it is essentially one, or again, we call many people a single entity, when they are all of one accord. "And the younger of them said to his father" (Luke 15:12). It stands to reason that he was the younger, for he makes a childish and very foolish request. The sin which he had in his mind as he hatched his plan to depart is itself younger than virtue, being a later invention of our evil inclinations. Virtue, by contrast, is ancient, for it was eternally with God, and was instilled in our soul from the beginning by the grace of God.

11. "The younger of them", it says, "came and said to his father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." What foolishness! He did not fall down at his father's feet beseeching him, he simply said it. Moreover, he demands his portion like a debt from Him who graciously gives to everyone. "Give me the portion of goods which legally belongs to me, my just share." By which law and which justice are fathers in debt to their children? Quite the opposite: children are in debt to their fathers, as nature proves, for they owe their existence to them. This too shows his childish frame of mind.

12. What does He do who sends rain on the just and the unjust, who makes the sun rise on the evil and the good (Matt. 5:45)? "He divided unto them his living" (Luke 15:12). Note that this man, the father, needs nothing for himself. Otherwise he would not have divided his living just between the two of them, or just into two portions, but would have kept back a third portion for himself. Being God, "He has no need of our good things", as David says (Ps. 15:2 Lxx). So he divided his living, which means the whole world, between these two sons. As the one nature is divided by two differing minds, so the one world is put to two differing uses. One person says to God, "All the day long I have stretched forth my hands unto thee" (Ps. 88:9), "Seven times a day do I praise thee" (Ps. 119:164), "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee" (Ps. 119:62), "At the last hour I cried unto the Lord" (Ps. 119:1 Lxx), "I trust in thy words" (Ps. 119:42) and "I will early destroy all the wicked of the land" (Ps. 101:8), meaning he will cut off the longings of the flesh that lead to sensual pleasure. Another spends all day over his wine and looking for places to drink. His nights are passed in impure and lawless actions and he rushes

headlong into concealed dangers, or obvious treacheries, robberies and evil projects. Yet both shared the same night, the same sun and, most importantly, the same nature, exploiting it in opposite ways. God has divided the whole creation equally to all, offering it to each to use as he pleases.

13. "And not many days after", it says, "the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country" (Luke 15:13). Why did he not set off at once instead of a few days after? The evil prompter, the devil, does not simultaneously suggest to us that we should do what we like and that we should sin. Instead he cunningly beguiles us little by little, whispering, "Even if you live independently without going to God's Church or listening to the Church teacher,[29] you will still be able to see for yourself what your duty is and not depart from what is good." When he separates someone from the divine services and obedience to the holy teachers, he also distances him from God's vigilance and surrenders him to evil deeds. God is everywhere present. Only one thing is far away from His goodness: evil. Being in the power of evil through sin we set off on a journey far away from God. As David says to God, "The evil shall not stand in thy sight" (Ps. 5:5).

14. Once the younger son had gone away and taken his journey into a far country, "there he dispersed his substance with riotous living" (Luke 15:13). How did he disperse his substance? Above all it is our inborn mind that is our substance and our wealth. As long as we are faithful to the ways of salvation, our mind is at one with itself and with God, the first and highest Mind. Whenever we open the door to the passions, immediately it is dispersed, wandering continually among fleshly and earthly things, all kinds of pleasures and passionate thoughts about them. The wealth of the mind is prudence,[30] which stays with it, discerning between what is better and what is worse, for as long as the mind itself stays obedient to the commandments and counsels of the heavenly Father. Once the mind rebels, prudence is dispersed in fornication and foolishness, shared out between both evils.

15. You will see the same happening with all our virtues and faculties, which are truly our wealth. Evil is always near at hand, and if they turn aside to it they are dispersed. Our mind itself stretches out in longing towards the one God Who Is, the only Good, the only Desired, the only Bestower of pleasure unmixed with pain. But once the mind has been enfeebled, the soul's ability for real love falls away

from what is truly desired, and, scattered among various longings for sensual pleasures, is dispersed, pulled this way and that by desires for superfluous foods, dishonourable bodies, useless objects, and empty, inglorious glory. So the wretched man is cut to pieces and tortured by the cares these things bring, and cannot even enjoy breathing the air or seeing the sun, the riches we all share.

16. If our mind has not distanced itself from God it stirs up our anger against the devil alone, and puts the soul's courage to use against the evil passions, the rulers of darkness and the spirits of wickedness. But if the mind does not heed the divine commandments of the Lord who armed it with these weapons, it fights against its neighbours, rages against its fellow-countrymen and hunts down those who do not agree with its own absurd desires. Such a man, alas, becomes a murderer. He is not only like an animal, but like a reptile or some venomous creature: a scorpion, a snake, one of the viper's brood, although he was appointed to be a son of God. Do you see how he has dispersed and done away with his substance? "And when", it says, "the younger son had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want" (Luke 15:14). He did not think yet about returning, profligate as he was, so "he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine" (Luke 15:15).

17. Who are the citizens and rulers of that country far from God? The demons, of course, by whom the son of the heavenly Father is appointed a brothel-keeper, a chief publican, a captain of thieves and a leader of rebels. The life of pigs, because of its extreme filthiness, is symbolic of all the passions. Those who wallow in the mire of the passions are the pigs, of which the younger son was put in charge, as surpassing them all in self-indulgence.[31] But he could not eat his fill of the husks the pigs ate, meaning that he could not find satisfaction for his desires.

18. Why is the nature of the body not adequate to serve the impulses of the dissolute man? If someone who loves money gets gold or silver, his need for it grows, and the more it flows in, the more it increases his desire. The whole world might just satisfy one greedy, power-seeking man, but then again, it might not. And as there are many such and only one world, how can even one of them satisfy his desire? So it was that the younger son, who had distanced himself from God, was not able to eat his fill. No one, it says, gave him enough to satisfy him. Who would be able to? God was absent, whom just

to regard brings untiring satisfaction to the beholder. As it says, "I shall be satisfied when I have seen your glory" (Ps. 16:15 LXX). The devil does not want to satisfy shameful desires, because satisfaction naturally produces a change in relation to what is being consumed. It stands to reason therefore that no one gave the younger son enough to satisfy him.

19. As soon as the son who had broken away from his father came to his senses and realized into what evils he had sunk, he wept over himself saying, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger?" (Luke 15:17). Who are the hired servants? Those who through the sweat of repentance and humility gain salvation as their reward. Sons, by contrast, are those who obey God's commandments out of love. As the Lord said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23).

20. So the younger son, who has abandoned his sonship, come out of his holy country of his own free will, and fallen into famine, passes judgment on himself, humbles himself and repents, saying, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee" (Luke 15:18). We were right when we said at the beginning that this father is God. How could this son who had left his father have sinned against heaven unless his father was in heaven? For he says, "I have sinned against heaven", meaning against the saints, the citizens of heaven, "and before thee", who dwellest in heaven with Thy saints, "and I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (Luke 15:19). Brought to his senses by humility he is right to say, "make me". Nobody can manage the steps of virtue on his own, though also not without his own deliberate choice. "And he arose", it says, "and came to his father. When he was still a great way off" (Luke 15:20). How did he come to Him when he was still far away, so that his father, having compassion on him, came out to meet him? He who repents in his soul reaches God by his good purpose and his rejection of sin. He is, however, still far from God, tyrannized mentally by habitual sins and failings, and he needs great compassion and help from above if he is to be saved.

21. The Father of Mercies came down to meet him. He embraced him and ordered his servants, namely the priests, to put on him the best robe, sonship, in which he had been clothed before through holy baptism, and to place a ring on his hand, putting the seal of contemplative virtue on the active part of the soul,[32] as symbolized by the

hand, as an earnest of the inheritance to come. He also ordered them to put shoes on his feet as holy protection and assurance to empower him to tread on snakes and scorpions and all the power of the enemy. Then he orders the fatted calf to be brought, slain and offered at table. This calf is the Lord Himself who is led out from the hidden place of divinity, from the heavenly Throne set above all things. Having appeared on earth as a man, He is slain like a fatted calf for us sinners, that is, He is offered to us as bread to eat.[33]

22. God shares His joy and celebration over these events with His saints, making our ways His own, and His extreme love for mankind, and saying, "Come, let us eat and be merry" (Luke 15:23). The elder son, however, is angry. Remember the Jews who were angry when the Gentiles were called, the scribes and Pharisees who were scandalized when the Lord accepted sinners and ate with them. Should you wish to think such things even of righteous people, it is not at all strange, if the righteous man is ignorant of the riches of God's goodness which surpass all our understanding. So the father of both sons pleads with the elder one and teaches him what is fitting, saying, "Thou art ever with me", sharing unchanging joy, "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:31, 32). He was dead by reason of sin, and is alive again through repentance. He was lost because he was not to be found in God, but now that he has been found he fills heaven with joy, as it is written, "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:7).

23. Why exactly is the elder son aggrieved? "Thou never gavest me a kid", he says, "that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf" (Luke 15:29–30). God's gifts to us are so surpassingly great that even the angels desire to look into the things He has bestowed upon us through His incarnation, as Peter, the chief apostle, says (1 Pet. 1:12). For this reason righteous people too wanted Christ to come before the appointed time, as Abraham desired to see His day (Matt. 13:17; Luke 10:24; *cf.* John 8:56). But He did not come at that time, and when He did come, He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance (Matt. 9:13, Mark 2:17, Luke 5:32), and above all, to be crucified for them, taking away the sin of the world (John 1:29). "For where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20).

24. That God does not give the righteous even one goat, meaning one sinner, when they ask Him is clear to us for many reasons, but especially on account of the vision of holy and blessed Carpus.[34] When he cursed certain wicked men and said it was unjust that unbelieving men who pervert the straight ways of the Lord should live, not only was he not heard, but he experienced God's displeasure. He heard terrifying words which led him to acknowledge God's unspeakable, incomprehensible forbearance and persuaded him not to curse those living wicked lives but rather to pray for them, as God still grants them time to repent. To show this, and at the same time to prove that He gives great and enviable gifts to those who return to Him in repentance, the God of the penitent, the Father of Mercies, devised this parable.

25. May we too, brethren, take hold of repentance by our actions. Let us abandon the evil one and his herds. Let us keep away from pigs and the husks they eat, that is to say, the disgusting passions and their devotees. Let us withdraw from evil pastures, namely, habitual sins. Let us flee from the land of the passions, which means unbelief, insatiate desire and intemperance, where there is a terrible famine of good things and where there are passions worse than any famine. Let us run to the immortal Father, the giver of life, as we follow, through the virtues, the path that leads to life. There we shall find that, in His love for mankind, He has come out to meet us, granting us forgiveness of sins, the token of immortality, the earnest of our inheritance to come. As we are taught by the Saviour, as long as the prodigal son was in the land of passions, even though he thought and spoke words of repentance, he gained no benefit at all. Only when he left all his sinful deeds and ran to his father did he attain what was beyond hope. From then on he stayed near him in humility, living chastely and honestly and preserving unharmed the grace renewed in him by God.

26. May all of us attain this grace and keep it undiminished, that in the age to come we may rejoice with the prodigal son who was saved, in the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of the living, the Church of the firstborn, in Christ Himself our Lord, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

HOMILY FOUR

ON THE GOSPEL PASSAGE DESCRIBING CHRIST'S SECOND COMING[35]

AND ON COMPASSION AND DOING GOOD

LAST SUNDAY, THROUGH THE PARABLE of the prodigal who was saved, the Church commemorated God's incomparable love for mankind. This Sunday it teaches us about His terrifying Judgment to come, following the right order and in accordance with the prophetic sayings: "I will sing of mercy and of judgment" (Ps. 101:1), and, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his works" (Ps. 62:11–12).

2. Mercy and forbearance precede the divine Judgment. God Himself is the first possessor of every virtue and embraces them all. He is both just and merciful. But as mercy does not go with judgment, as it is written, "Thou shalt not be merciful to a poor man at the judgment" (*cf.* Prov. 24:23), God rightly allotted a proper time to each, appointing the present for forbearance, the future for retribution. The grace of the Spirit so ordered the rites of the Holy Church,[36] that when we learn that we receive forgiveness of sins from what happens here and now, we may press on while still in this present life to attain everlasting mercy and make ourselves worthy of the divine love for mankind. For that Judgment is without mercy for the unmerciful.

3. We have just recently spoken of God's incomparable compassion towards us. Today our subject is Christ's second coming, the terrifying Judgment, and the things that will then be mysteriously

fulfilled, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. 2:9), the heart, that is, which has no share in the divine Spirit. These things surpass both the human mind and reason as well as the senses. But although He who teaches us of them is Himself all-knowing and will judge the whole earth, He comes down to his listeners' level and offers words suited to their capability.[37] That is why lightning and clouds, trumpet and throne and the like are brought in, even though we look for new heavens and a new earth (*cf.* 2 Pet. 3:13), in accordance with His own promise, for all that now exists will be changed.[38]

4. If mere words, words adapted to our measure, can fill the soul of the prudent listener with trembling and awe, who will withstand when the reality is accomplished? What sort of lives ought we to be living in holiness and godliness, as we wait for the coming of the Day of God, that day on which, as the divine Peter says, "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (2 Pet. 3:12). Before that, however, will be the grievous coming of the Antichrist to oppose and threaten the faith which, if it were not shortened, being allowed only for a brief time, there should no flesh be saved, as the Lord says in the Gospels (Matt. 24:22, Mark 13:20). So He exhorts his followers, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

5. All these things are full of overwhelming horror, but worse still than these are threatened for those who waste their lives in unbelief, injustice and laziness. As the Lord says Himself, "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn" (Matt. 24:30). The tribes of the earth are people who do not obey Him who came down from heaven, who neither know the heavenly Father nor call upon Him, and do not lift up their race to Him by deeds that resemble His own. Again the Lord says, "For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth" (Luke 21:35, Isa. 24:17 LXX), meaning those nailed to the earth and earthly concerns by dissipation, drunkenness, self-indulgence and the cares of this life, wholly taken up with outwardly visible splendour, riches, glory and pleasure. The expression "face of the earth" refers to the earth's apparent pleasantness, whereas by saying "them that dwell" He implies their continuing inward attachment. With these words he puts sinners who continue unrepentant to the end together with the godless, for as Isaiah foretold, "The lawless and the sinners shall

burn together, and none shall quench them" (Isa. 1:31 LXX). "But our commonwealth is in heaven", says the apostle, "from whence also we look for the Saviour" (Phil. 3:20). The Lord said to His disciples, "you are not of the world" (John 15:19), and also, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

6. Notice how those who live according to Christ are filled with ineffable joy and courage by the events immediately following these, while those who live according to the flesh are filled with shame, suffering and dejection. As Paul too proclaims, "God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that obey evil, indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil" (Rom. 2:6–9). In the days of Noah, when evil had increased and held sway over nearly all the human race, there was a flood sent by God which wiped out everything living and kept safe only the righteous man and his family to start another world (*cf.* Gen. 6:5–9:2). And after that God again cut off evil when it was rampant, in turn burning the Sodomites to ashes (*cf.* Gen. 19:1–28), drowning Pharaoh's men in the sea in an extraordinary way (*cf.* Exod. 14:19–31), and destroying the shameless race of the Jews by famine, revolt, disease and bitter retribution (*cf.* Exod. 16:1–3; 17: 1–4; 32:1ff).

7. Our Physician made use of harsh medicines and remedies for our sake, but nevertheless He did not disregard such as work pleasantly and agreeably. He raised up fathers, revealed prophets, performed signs, gave the law and appointed angels. Since these means were powerless against the irrepressible impetus of our wickedness, the Word of God Himself, the great Remedy for grave sins, bowed the heavens and came down. Having become like us in everything, though without sin (*cf.* Heb. 4:15), He abolished sin in Himself. By giving us strength He dulled its sting, and on the Cross He put to shame its rulers and fellow-workers, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death (Heb. 2:14).

8. As in the days of Noah He flooded sinners with water, later He flooded sin with His own righteousness and grace, and raised Himself immortal, as a seed and first fruit of the world without end, a sign and proof of the resurrection for which we truly hope. When He had risen and ascended He sent out apostles into all the inhabited world, presented us with an innumerable throng of martyrs, appointed a

multitude of teachers, and revealed companies of saints. Then when He had done everything, and omitted nothing that had to be, He saw the evil caused by the independence of our free will[39] once more brought to a head. Or rather, in those days it will be seen to have reached such a peak that people will worship and obey the Antichrist, abandoning the true God and His true Christ. Then He will come again from heaven with great power and glory (*cf.* Mark 13:26), no longer to be patient but to punish those who in the days of his forbearance heaped up wrath against themselves. He will cut off the incurable from the healthy like rotting limbs and deliver them into the fire, but His own He will rescue from the spiteful abuse of evil men and from contact with them, and will make them heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

9. Immediately after the abominable advent of the Antichrist, He who fashioned everything will shake it all again. As the prophet says, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven" (Heb. 12:26, *cf.* Hag. 2:21). Straight away He shakes the world, dismantles the upper boundary of the universe, folds up the vault of heaven, mingles the earth with fire and puts everything into confusion. From below He forces open the foundations of the whole world, from above He sends down the multitude of stars like an indescribably terrible hurricane upon the heads of those who made the evil one their God, that the believers in the Antichrist might be punished first by this means, whose minds were engrossed in him and who were persuaded that the opposite to God was God. Then He will appear in unutterable glory and, as He once breathed life into our first father Adam, so with a clear trumpet call He will bring everyone to life. He will have the dead from all ages standing before Him alive. But He will not bring the godless to judgment nor count them worthy of a word. For according to the Scriptures the ungodly will be resurrected not for judgment but for condemnation (*cf.* Matt. 12:41–42, Luke 11:31–32).

10. He will subject all our affairs to judgment, as we read in today's Gospel. "When the Son of man", it says, "shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him" (Matt. 25:31). At His first coming the glory of His divinity was hidden beneath the flesh which He took from us and for our sake. Now it is hidden, together with the flesh which is divine, with the Father in heaven. But then He will reveal all His glory, for He will appear in radiance from the east to the west, illuminating the ends of the earth with the rays of His Godhead, while the trumpet that brings the dead to life shall sound throughout the

world, summoning everything to Him. He also brought angels with Him before, though invisibly, and He restrained their zeal against God's enemies. Afterwards He will lead them openly and will not keep silent, but will put the disobedient to shame and hand them over for punishment.

11. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then", it says, "shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matt. 25:31). Daniel foresaw and foretold this, saying, "Behold thrones were set and the Ancient of days did sit, and I beheld one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days. And there was given him all honour and dominion. Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him" (*cf.* Dan. 7:9–13). The Holy Gospel says, in accordance with this, that in those days, "before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:32). He calls the righteous sheep because they are meek and gentle, walk the level path of the virtues that He trod, and are like Him. For He was Himself called a lamb by the Forerunner and Baptist who said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The sinners He calls goats because they are audacious and unruly, and rush down the precipices of sin. The sheep, it says, He shall set on his right hand as those who act rightly, but the others on the left. "Then", it says, "shall the king say", without adding which king or of whom he is king, for there is no other, but only one is Lord, one is King, He who by nature is Lord of all. Then the one and only King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

12. The world was founded with this in view from the beginning. The heavenly, pre-eternal Counsel of the Father, according to which the Angel of the Father's Great Counsel made man (Isa. 9:6)[40] as a living creature in His own likeness as well as His image, was for this end: to enable man at some time to contain the greatness of God's kingdom, the blessedness of God's inheritance and the perfection of the heavenly Father's blessing, by which everything visible and invisible was made. He did not refer to "the visible world" but to "the world" without qualification, heavenly as well as earthly. Even the indescribable divine self-emptying, the theandric way of life,[41] the

saving passion, all the sacraments were planned beforehand in God's providence and wisdom for this end, that everyone who is shown to be faithful in the present shall hear the Saviour say, "Well done, thou good servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21). "Come", He says, "you who made good use of the earthly, perishable and fleeting world in accordance with my will, and inherit as well the lasting, heavenly world which is now at hand." "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Matt. 25:35–36).

13. At this point we might enquire why He only mentions works of mercy,[42] and why it is only on account of them that He gives this blessing, inheritance and kingdom. But if we listen with understanding, He does not mention these alone. Earlier He called those who performed works of mercy sheep, and in this way He bears witness to their likeness to Himself, their possession of every virtue, and their readiness to die for the sake of what is good. Just as He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, according to the Scriptures (Isa. 53:7, Acts 8:32).

14. Because they are people like this, he extols their good works as well. Anyone who is to inherit the everlasting kingdom must have good works as the proof and the fruit of love, as the crown of all the other virtues. The Lord showed this in the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1–13). Not everyone who happens to be there is led into the bridechamber, only those adorned with virginity, which cannot be accomplished without ascetic effort,[43] self-control[44] and many different struggles in the cause of virtue. Besides they must hold lamps in their hands, which denotes their minds and the watchful knowledge enclosed within, borne upon and supported by the practical part of their souls[45] – as signified by their hands. Such knowledge must be dedicated to God for life and set alight with His brilliance. But oil in abundance is needed to keep the lamps burning, and this oil is love, the summit of all the virtues. If you lay down foundations and build walls, but do not put on the roof, you leave it all useless. In the same way, if you acquire every virtue except love, they are all useless and senseless. Though the roof cannot be constructed without the supporting walls.

15. The Lord therefore grants His inheritance to those who have sealed the other virtues with loving deeds, who either ascended to love by way of a blameless life or fled to it for refuge through repentance. Those who have kept safe the mystical rebirth that comes from God, I call sons, whereas the hired servants have been called back again to grace as a reward for many different labours of repentance and humility.

16. After having initially expounded various matters concerning the Judgment in the Holy Gospels, He introduces the subject of love, which fulfills and stirs up the virtues previously enumerated. But the righteous will reply (Matt. 25:37–39): "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" Do you see that those on the right are also called righteous? Accordingly their mercy proceeds from, and is accompanied by, righteousness. Do you see that testimony is given that the righteous also possess another virtue, humility, in the fullness of their love, like a protective wall raised up around them at the right moment? They insist that they are unworthy of the proclamation and the praise, as having done nothing good, although it is attested that they left no good undone.

17. I think this is why the Lord responds to them boldly, that they may clearly show what they are like, and may be lifted up by humility and rightly find grace with Him who bestows it abundantly on the humble, for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (Prov. 3:34 Lxx, Jas. 4:6). He now tells them, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40). He calls the person least on account of his poverty and lowliness, but His brother because He Himself lived in this way on earth according to the flesh.

18. Listen and be glad, all you who are poor and needy, for in this you are God's brethren. Even if you are poor and lowly against your will, with patience and thanksgiving voluntarily turn it to your own good. Listen, all you who are rich, and long for blessed poverty, that you may become more truly heirs and brethren of Christ than those who are involuntarily poor, for of His own free will He made Himself poor for our sake. Listen and groan, all you who overlook your suffering brethren, or rather, Christ's brethren, and do not give the poor a share of your abundant food, shelter, clothing and

care as appropriate, nor offer your surplus to meet their need. Let us listen and groan ourselves, for I who am telling you these things stand accused by my conscience of not being completely free of this passion. While many people shiver and go without, I am well fed and clothed. But more grievously to be mourned over are those who have treasures in excess of their daily needs, who hold on to them and even strive to increase them. They have been commanded to love their neighbours as themselves and have not even loved them as dust, for what are gold and silver, which they loved more than their brethren, other than dust.

19. But let us change direction, repent and agree together to supply the needs of the poor brethren among us by whatever means we have. If we prefer not to empty out all we possess for the love of God, let us at least not callously hold on to everything for ourselves. Let us do something, then humble ourselves before God and obtain forgiveness from Him for what we have failed to do. For His love for mankind makes up for our omissions, that we may never hear the horrifying voice: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed" (Matt. 25:41). How great a horror! "Be ye removed from life, cast out of paradise, deprived of light!"

20. Not this alone, but also, "Depart from me, ye cursed, unto everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). Those on the right will have life and have it more abundantly: life through being with God, abundance of life through continuing as sons and heirs of His kingdom. Those of the left, having failed to gain the kingdom by being far away from God, will find even more evil through being ranked with the demons, and delivered up to the punishing fire.

21. What sort of fire is that, which burns bodies, and rational beings with bodies, and spirits without bodies, tormenting them while detaining them for ever alive? It will melt even the fiery element in us, for the Scripture says "the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (2 Pet. 3:10, 12). How greatly is suffering increased when there is no hope of redemption. And that fire is unquenchable. Again, what gives it its violent impetus? They say a river draws that fire along, apparently bearing it ever further away from God. So He did not say "You have departed", but "Depart from me, ye cursed". "You have long been cursed by the poor, and as they suffered so much you deserve cursing. 'Depart', He tells them, 'into everlasting fire, prepared', not for you,

'but for the devil and his angels'. For this was not originally My will. I did not create you for this, nor did I prepare the fire for you. The unquenchable fire was lit for the demons who are irreversibly in the grip of evil. You joined them because your unrepentant minds were like theirs, and you share the dwelling of the evil angels by your own choice." "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not" (Matt. 25:42–43). As love and loving deeds, brethren, are the fulfilment of the virtues, so hatred and the outcome of hatred, behaviour devoid of compassion and a mind devoid of the desire to share, are the full measure of sin. As the virtues follow upon benevolence and are associated with it, so evil deeds follow upon hatred for our fellow man, and for this hatred alone they are condemned.

22. I wanted to say that there was no greater proof of hatred than preferring excess money to our brother. But I see that evil has found a greater proof of hatred for our fellow man. For some people not only do not give alms out of their abundance, but even appropriate what belongs to others. Let them deduce from the sentence given to the unmerciful what their own fate and suffering will be, and how indescribable and unbearable is the condemnation they deserve. Let them give up injustice and by works of repentance find mercy with God. On that day the unmerciful will reply, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" (Matt. 25:44).

23. Observe this last evil: pride is yoked with callous behaviour, as humility is with compassion. When the righteous are praised for doing good they humble themselves the more, without justifying themselves. When these others are accused of being devoid of compassion by Him who cannot lie, they do not humbly throw themselves to the ground, but answer back and justify themselves. So they go on to hear, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." So "these shall go away", it says, "into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46).

24. Let us be merciful to ourselves by being merciful to others, gain compassion by showing compassion, and do good that good may be done to us. For we receive the like in return: good works, benevolence, love, mercy and compassion, but not merely to the same value

and measure of excellence. You give out of what you possess as a man, and only as much as a man can bestow. But you receive in return a hundredfold from the inexhaustible divine treasures, together with eternal life, and benefit from as many great bounties as God can bestow, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. 2:9).

25. May we make haste to obtain the riches of kindness and buy an eternal kingdom in exchange for a little money. We should be afraid even now of the sentence pronounced on the unmerciful, lest we receive the same condemnation. There is no need to fear that if we give alms we shall become poor, for we shall hear Christ say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom" (Matt. 25:34). Let us be afraid of being shown to be excluded from loving God by our lack of compassion, and do everything to avoid this. "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen", says the evangelist, "how can he love God whom he hath not seen" (1 John 4:20). And how can someone who does not love God be with Him? Anyone who is not with Him will be driven away from Him, and anyone driven away from Him will certainly fall into hell.[46]

26. Let us show loving deeds towards our brethren in Christ by being merciful to the poor and restoring those who have gone astray, whatever their poverty or error may be, by obtaining justice for the wronged, by encouraging those laid low by sickness, whether their suffering be due to visible enemies and physical ailments or to invisible evil spirits and dishonourable passions, by visiting those confined in prison, and even by bearing with those who injure us, forgiving one another any cause for complaint we may have among ourselves, as Christ forgave us. In a word, let us show love to one another by all our actions and words. So may we attain to God's love, receive His blessing and inherit the eternal heavenly kingdom promised to us and prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

27. May we all attain to this by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom, together with the Father and also the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FIVE

ON THE MEETING
OF OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST[47]

INCLUDING THE SUBJECT OF CHASTITY AND ITS EVIL OPPOSITE

BEFORE CHRIST WE ALL SHARED the same ancestral curse and condemnation poured out on all of us from our single forefather, as if it had sprung from the root of the human race and was the common lot of our nature. Each person's individual action attracted either reproof or praise from God, but no one could do anything about the shared curse and condemnation, or the evil inheritance that had been passed down to him and through him would pass to his descendants.

2. But Christ came, setting human nature free and changing the common curse into a shared blessing. He took upon Himself our guilty nature from the most pure Virgin and united it, new and unmixed with the old seed, to His divine person. He rendered it guiltless and righteous, so that all His spiritual descendants would remain outside the ancestral curse and condemnation. How so? He shares His grace with each one of us as a person, and each receives forgiveness of his sins from Him. For He did not receive from us a human person, but assumed our human nature and renewed it by uniting it with His own person.[48] His wish was to save us all completely and for our sake He bowed the heavens and came down. When by His deeds, words and sufferings He had pointed out all the ways of salvation, He went up to heaven again, drawing after Him those who trusted in Him. His aim

was to grant perfect redemption not just to the nature which He had assumed from us in inseparable union, but to each one of those who believed in Him. This He has done and continues to do, reconciling each of us through Himself to the Father, bringing each one back to obedience and thoroughly healing our disobedience.

3. To this end, He established holy baptism and gave us saving laws. He preached repentance and shared His own body and blood with us. For it is not only human nature in general, but each believer as a person who receives baptism, governs his life by the holy commandments and becomes a partaker of the Bread that makes divine and of the Cup. By these means Christ justified each one of us personally and restored us to obedience to the heavenly Father. He renewed the human nature He took from us and by what He did and suffered in His person united with our nature, He revealed it as sanctified, justified and completely obedient to the Father. Among the things He did and suffered are the events we celebrate today, when He went up, or was taken up, to the ancient Temple for purification, was met by the God-bearing Simeon, and was proclaimed by Anna, who spent her whole life attending to the Temple.

4. After the Saviour was born of the Virgin and circumcised on the eighth day according to the law, then, as Luke the evangelist says, "when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord; as it is written in the law of the Lord" (Luke 2:22). He is circumcised according to the law, brought to Jerusalem according to the law, presented to the Lord as it is written in the law and a sacrifice is offered as the law demands.

5. Notice that the Creator and Lord of the law is completely obedient to the law. What does He achieve by this? He makes our nature obedient in all things to the Father, He completely heals us of its disobedience and transforms the curse on it into a blessing. As all human nature was in Adam, so it is in Christ. All who received their being from the earthly Adam have returned to the earth and been brought down, alas, to Hades.[49] But, according to the apostle, through the heavenly Adam we have all been called up to heaven and made worthy of its glory and grace. Secretly for the present, for it says "your life is hid with Christ in God". But, "when Christ shall appear", at His second manifestation and coming, "then shall ye all appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:3). What does it mean by "all"? All those

who have received the adoption of sons in Christ by the Spirit, and have proved by their deeds that they are His spiritual children.

6. "And when the days of their purification were accomplished they brought him to present him to the Lord" (Luke 2:22). Whose purification? The law says that the parents and the children born from their coming together need to be purified. Also the psalmist says, "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). Where there were no parents, only one Virgin Mother, and the child born was conceived without seed, there was of course no need for purification. But this too was an act of obedience which restored disobedient human nature and took away the guilt of its disobedience. So "when the days of their purification were accomplished, they brought him to present him to the Lord", to dedicate Him, to declare openly that He was a firstborn son, as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord" (Exod. 13:2, 12, 15; 34:19, Luke 2:23).

7. He is the only one who opened the womb at His conception, for He was conceived not through parents' coming together but simply through God's salutation and message which the Virgin heard from the angel. So why does the law say "*every* male that openeth the womb"? Just as "prophets" and "anointed ones" are referred to in the plural when God says through the psalmist, "Touch not mine anointed ones, and do my prophets no harm" (Ps. 105:15, 1 Chr. 16:22), even though there is only one anointed and only this one particular prophet, so every firstborn is said to open the womb, even though the only one who truly did so is the holy one of Israel. Then, it says, they brought Him up "to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons" (Luke 2:24).

8. The pair of turtledoves, reflecting the parents' chastity, referred in some way to those yoked together in lawful marriage. The two young pigeons, knowing nothing of marriage, clearly foretold the Virgin and Him who was born of her and was a virgin to the end. Notice how precise the law is. It stipulated a pair of turtledoves which symbolize those yoked in marriage, but was careful not to refer to the young pigeons as a pair, for neither the Mother nor her Son knew anything of the married state. The law prophesied these things and through them foreshadowed the virgin birth, which it declared long before. When the child born in so marvellous a way was brought up to the Temple, the Holy Spirit prepared other, more fitting turtledoves and

young pigeons. Who might these be? Simeon and Anna, who could be said to be young pigeons, because of their babe-like innocence of evil, or rightly called turtledoves on account of their utter chastity.

9. If we run quickly through the Gospel verses, we see that Simeon, a just and devout man, had been warned beforehand by the Holy Spirit and was moved by Him to come unto the Temple at this time. He met the heavenly and earthly infant and took Him in his arms. As God, he offered Him a hymn and a supplication, asking Him to let him depart from the body, declaring Him to all as the light of salvation (*cf.* Luke 2:29–32), and asserting that He was set for the fall of unbelievers and the resurrection of those who believed in Him (*cf.* Luke 2: 34).

10. Then he conversed with the infant's Virgin Mother. He showed that her grief on account of the child's Cross revealed her as the mother according to nature of the now theandric Babe, and that by disclosing the doubtful thoughts surrounding the child she would dispel them from people's hearts. Simeon gave the true Mother of the paradoxical[50] child clear evidence of her pain at the child's suffering and her intense sorrow and compassion for Him (*cf.* Luke 2:35).

11. The prophetess Anna, widow of Phanuel,[51] was about eighty-four years old. Devoted to fasts and prayers, she never left the Temple. At that moment, more than ever in the power of the Holy Spirit, she gave thanks to God and announced the good tidings, that redemption, which she declared to be this infant, had come to those who were waiting for it (*cf.* Luke 2:38).

12. The Holy Spirit sent this dovelike pair into the Temple beforehand to meet Christ when He came, teaching us what sort of people those who receive Christ should be, and what sort of people women who have lost their husbands and men who have lost their wives should be. For this Anna, Phanuel's widow, was both a widow and a prophetess. How was this possible? Because she renounced the worldly cares of everyday life and did not leave the Temple. She spent her days and nights in fasts, vigils, prayers and psalmody, and her life was blameless. So it stands to reason that she recognized the Lord, whom she served by her actions, when He came. As the psalmist and prophet says of Him, "I will sing and I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me?" (Ps. 101:1–2).

13. Men and women who choose, after being honourably widowed, to draw near to a life of virginity or to live with someone else,[52] should be like this. If you altogether despise second marriages as something

base, then hold fast to your purpose and follow in the footsteps of those who stayed unmarried all their lives. At one time Peter had a mother-in-law (*cf.* Mark 1:29–31, Luke 4:38–39), but he did not lag behind the virgin John when they both ran to the tomb where life began (*cf.* John 20:3–6). In some ways he even surpassed John, for he was appointed leader of the leaders by their Lord (*cf.* Matt. 16:18–19, John 21:15–17). When desire is redirected from the flesh to the spirit it raises us to such heights.

14. Be careful not to stand aloof from marriage as from something vulgar whilst at the same time failing to remain chaste because it is too difficult. In that case, you will drift away and fall unawares, for you are following neither what is according to the law nor what is superior to the law, but what is against the law. We regard widowed people who do not live chastely as worthy of condemnation, and even if they are lawfully joined in a second marriage we do not deem them completely blameless – for Paul says that they have cast off their first faith (*cf.* 1 Tim. 5:11–12, 1 Cor. 7:27, 39–40). So how much more to be condemned are those who prefer illicit pleasure to lawful marriage, and who live with their wives but do not abstain from fornication. It was fornication which brought the universal flood upon those originally called God's sons (Gen. 6:1–7), which caused fire to rain down from heaven on the men of Sodom (Gen. 13:13; 18:20; 19:5–25), and brought defeat and terrible slaughter to the Israelites at the hands of the Moabites (Num. 25:1–9). And at the present time, in my opinion, it brings upon us defeats at our enemies' hands and all sorts of misfortunes and disasters from within and without.

15. The first to be called sons of God in the Scriptures are the descendants of Enos, who was the first to hope to be called by the Name of the Lord (*cf.* Gen. 4:26 LXX).[53] Enos was the son of Seth, whose family was separate from the accursed family of Cain, and lived chastely. For their sake the world continued until, according to the Scripture, they saw the daughters of men, that is, the women of Cain's stock, that they were fair (Gen. 6:2). Overcome by their corrupt beauty, they took wives of all whom they chose, and learnt their ways. Then evil increased on earth and the flood came and swept them all away (Gen. 6:17ff). If on earth in those days Noah and his sons had not been found to be chaste[54] – as shown by the fact that each man had one wife with whom he went into the ark (Gen. 7:13) – there would have been no root or source from which a second world could begin.

16. Notice that the world would have been destroyed in those days on account of the promiscuous, had it not been preserved for the sake of the chaste. How will people who are unworthy even of this present life, seeing that they pervert its order into disorder, not be banished from the age to come? They will be handed over to the fire of hell because they did not withstand the fire of fleshly pleasures, unless they make haste now to quench it with repentance and wash away with tears the stains it has already caused. They should also be aware that if they do not quickly make a stand against this passion, in time they will be delivered up to worse, shameful, unnatural passions. These are the product of impure desires and attract here and now the fire of hell, which seizes the licentious and carries them away to eternal punishment.

17. Everyone has heard of the men of Sodom, of their fervour for completely unlawful depravity, the unprecedented rain of fire that fell on them and their destruction. Often a whole town had to bear the consequences of one man's lechery, as in the case of the inhabitants of the town of Shechem who were completely wiped out by Jacob's sons because Shechem defiled Jacob's daughter Dinah (Gen. 34:2–31). If we leave aside now those who lived before the law, the law itself commands that if a bride is found not to be a virgin she is to be stoned (Deut. 22:13–21), and if a priest's daughter plays the harlot she is to be burnt with fire (Lev. 21:9). It is also forbidden to offer the wages of prostitution in the Lord's Temple (Deut. 23:18). When the Israelites defiled themselves with Moabite women, twenty-three thousand men perished by the sword in one day (1 Cor. 10:8, *cf.* Num. 25:1–9, Exod. 32:28).[55] The great Paul tells us, "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand" (1 Cor. 10:8). Such are the penalties for fornication before the law and under the law, once the law was given.

18. But what about ourselves who have been enjoined to crucify the flesh with the passions and lusts (Gal. 5:24), but fall again into those sins on account of which God's wrath comes upon the children of disobedience (Col. 3:6)? We have been exhorted to mortify our members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection and lust, and have not heeded the advice (Col. 3:5). At the end of the day, if nothing else, we should at least fear natural disasters: from below, from above, those which have happened already, those eternal ones which threaten us. We should stand in awe of the appearance of Christ, the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2), in the flesh, and walk honestly as in

the day (*cf.* Rom. 13:13). We should be afraid of the apostle's warnings, declarations and counsels when he says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy" (1 Cor. 3:16–17). Also, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19, 21). Also, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:5). Also, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication. For God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath given us his Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 4:3, 7–8).

19. Who could recount all the sayings of the apostles and prophets on this subject? Those who are chaste, and therefore belong among Christ's members, are commanded by the apostle as follows: "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators" (1 Cor. 5:9). Because they themselves feel no shame, he advises the others to avoid them and awaken shame in them saying, "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, with such an one do not eat" (1 Cor. 5:11). Notice that anyone who wallows in fornication is a stain on the whole Church (1 Cor. 5:6), so everyone should turn away from him and drive him out (1 Cor. 5:7). Paul himself delivered to Satan the fornicator in Corinth and neither allowed love to be shown towards him, nor accepted him, until he exhibited fitting repentance (1 Cor. 5:5ff).

20. Save your soul, O man, from such present and future evils, and from those twofold evils which are both in the present and the future. Esau's descendants were outcasts because he was immoral and sacrilegious (Gen. 25:25ff; 26:34–35, Heb. 12:16). Rehoboam was deprived of most of his kingdom (1 Kgs. 11:43) because his father Solomon, who was exceptionally obsessed with women (1 Kgs. 11:1–4, *cf.* Neh. 13:26), died without suffering this loss. Solomon was spared on account of David (1 Kgs. 11:34), who with streams of tears and other works of repentance, continuously eroded the curse that at one time was inflicted on him.

21. The apostle urges us once more, brethren, to flee fornication (1 Cor. 6:18). If Samson had fled from it, he would not have fallen into Delilah's hands after being deprived of the hair of his head and his

strength. He would not have been blinded nor lost his life in such an unfortunate way alongside his enemies (Judg. 14:1ff). If they who were led by Moses and to whom he had given the law had fled from fornication they would not have made sacrifices to Baal-peor (Num. 25:3), nor eaten sacrifices of the dead (Num. 25:2–3, and *cf.* Ps. 106:28, Hosea 9:10), nor fallen as often as they did. If Solomon had fled from it he would not have deserted God who made him king and gave him wisdom, nor would he have erected temples for idols (1 Kgs. 11:2–4).

22. You will observe that the passion of fornication pushes a person towards ungodliness. Susanna's beauty would not have beguiled the senior judges in Babylon, triumphed over them and resulted in their being stoned, if from the beginning they had fled from defilement and had not watched her every day lasciviously beforehand (Sus. 5–62). The wretched Holofernes would not have died with his neck severed if Judith's sandal had not previously, according to the Scripture, caught his eye and her beauty ensnared his soul (Judith 16:9). Job says, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid" (Job 31:1), how much less upon a corrupt woman either divorced or married.

23. Practise the single life as dear to God, or the married life as God's gift. Drink water from your own wells or rather, chastely from your one well. Keep away completely from the adulterated draught, which is the water of the Styx,[56] the stream of the river Acheron.[57] It is full of murderous venom and has poisonous powers, and invariably drags those who drink it down through the trapdoor of hell into its innermost recesses. Flee from the honeyed lips of prostitutes which are skilled in spreading shameful death, namely, separation from God. David said on this subject, "They that wantonly desert thee shall perish" (Ps. 72:27 LXX).

24. We, whose bodies have become the temple of God through the Spirit, and in whom the Spirit dwells, must be clean, or at least be in the process of being cleansed, and remain always undefiled, contenting ourselves with permissible pleasures. We must make haste to attain purity and chastity and avoid fornication and every uncleanness, in order to rejoice throughout all ages with the pure bridegroom in the unsullied bridechambers. By the prayers of the ever-virgin, most pure, all-glorious Mother who bore Him in virginity for our salvation,[58] now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY SIX

To Encourage Fasting[59]

INCLUDING A BRIEF WORD ON THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD

THE INVISIBLE SERPENT, the originator of evil, is inventive, versatile and extremely skilful in contriving wickedness. He has means to hinder our good purposes and actions as soon as they begin. But if he fails to prevent them initially, he sets up other devices by which he can render them useless once they are underway. If he is unable to make them worthless when they are half way to completion, he knows other tricks and ways to invalidate them even once they are finished, and makes them a source not of reward but of harm to all but the most careful. First of all he points out how laborious and difficult to accomplish virtue is. In this way he fills us with laziness and despair, as though we were attempting difficult and impossible things and were therefore incapable of putting our intentions into action. Then he engenders disbelief in the rewards which God has promised to those who struggle.

2. But we, brethren, should rise above this trap by our soul's courage, eagerness and faith. We should bear in mind the fact that just as the earth cannot yield worthwhile fruit without labour, so the soul cannot acquire anything which pleases God or leads to salvation without spiritual struggles. But while it is possible to find earth which is unsuitable for cultivation, every human soul is naturally suited to virtue. As we are all unavoidably condemned, however, by the judgment given against our forefather, to live by labour and toil, let us turn necessity into an honour and willingly offer to God what is ours not by our own will.[60] Let us give up transitory things in exchange

for things that endure, and receive what is beneficial in exchange for what is harmful, transforming short-lived toil into a means to gain eternal ease. If we labour here for the sake of virtue we shall certainly attain to the rest promised in the age to come. He who promised is trustworthy and is at hand to help all who readily take on the struggle for virtue. If He who can do all things gives us His help, is anything impossible to achieve?

3. When we remember this and eagerly apply ourselves to virtuous actions, the evil one, knowing that nothing can be good unless it is done in a good way,[61] strives to persuade us not to accomplish any good work with the object of pleasing God or of winning His approval, but to look for other people's approval. By this means he can deprive us of our reward from God and of all spiritual and heavenly honours. Let us frustrate these efforts of his by considering the great recompense stored up for those who live as God pleases, and how insignificant other people's approval is.[62] Not only is it not worth mentioning in comparison with the great and holy glory to come, but it is also insufficient reason to neglect and waste our flesh.

4. Even after suffering this defeat, the originator of evil undermined us with pride, the last and worst abyss. He suggests conceited thoughts and persuades us to boast as though we had managed to be virtuous through our own ability and intelligence. But let us remember that the Truth says, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5), and fend off all the evil one's schemes. Let us do good works in a good way, with appropriate humility. If someone has a jar of precious perfume, whether he pours it out on to dung, or pours dung into the jar, he ruins and destroys the perfume. Be aware that, in the same way, whether someone rejects and discards virtue by his inaction, or mixes evil with his virtuous actions, he equally ruins and destroys virtue.

5. I am speaking to your charity on this subject in this present season of fasting, so that we may observe it together for our own sake unalloyed with anything evil. Fasting was of no benefit to that Pharisee in the Gospel, even though he always fasted two days a week, because he had adulterated it with pride and condemnation of his neighbour (Luke 18:11–12). Not that this means fasting is unprofitable. Moses, Elijah and the Lord Himself showed how beneficial it is for those who fast properly in a way pleasing to God.

6. Moses fasted for many days. Awaken your minds, I entreat you, and lift them up at this opportune time, in company with Moses

when he went up the mountain towards God. In this way may you start off afresh on your ascent, and be lifted up together with Christ, who did not merely go up a mountain but up to heaven, taking us with Him. Moses fasted for forty days on the mountain and according to the Scriptures he saw God, not darkly but face to face (Exod. 24:18). He talked to Him as someone would speak to his friend (Exod. 33:11, Deut. 34:10). He learnt from God and taught everyone about Him: that He is He Who eternally Is (Exod. 3:14) and will never cease to be, that He summoned what did not exist into existence, brought all things out of non-being and will not let them fall back into non-existence. In the beginning He brought the whole visible creation out of nothing all at once, just by a nod and His will. "In the beginning", it says, "God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), not empty of course, nor without all that lies between them. The earth was interspersed with water, and both were full of air, animals and plants of various kinds, whereas the heavens were full of the various lights and fires, from which the universe is formed.[63]

7. So then, "in the beginning God made heaven and earth", as matter able to endure anything and strong enough to bear everything, rightly thereby dealing a blow from a distance to those who falsely hold that matter existed independently beforehand. Then He developed the world and embellished it. In six days He assigned to each of His creatures which made up His world its own due order. By His command alone He made the distinction between things, as if He were drawing out different kinds of treasure stored up in secret. He disposed and composed all things in complete natural harmony between themselves, each in relation to all, and all in relation to each. He surrounded the motionless earth, as a central point, with the higher circle of the perpetually moving heavens, holding them in place by means of what lies between, all according to His wisdom, that the universe might stay stable while in motion. When the heavenly bodies all around were moving unceasingly and at great speed, the motionless earth had of necessity to take its place at the centre, its stability counterbalancing the motion, lest the sphere of the universe roll off its course.[64]

8. When the great Craftsman had assigned to each of the two boundaries of the universe its place, He made fast and set in motion this whole orderly world. He allotted to everything between heaven and earth its own properties. Some of His works He placed aloft and

ordered them to move along a high course, going round at the same time as the upper boundary of the universe with beautiful regularity for ever. Such heavenly bodies are light, highly active and can be turned to the advantage of what lies below. They are wisely set very high above the central point so that, turning all around, they can sufficiently disperse the earth's excessive coldness, while their own extreme heat is contained in its place. In a way they can also restrain the excessive speed of the upper heavenly limits by themselves moving in the other direction, and they keep these limits in place by their counterbalancing orbit. They provide us with the great benefits of distinct annual seasons, a means of measuring periods of time and, to those who are able to understand, knowledge of God who created, arranged and ordered them.[65]

9. So some of His works He set spinning and dancing round in mid-air in the upper regions, both for the sake of the world's beauty and to bestow a variety of benefits. Others, those which are heavy and have a passible nature, he put low down round the centre. By their nature they come into being and pass away, are distinguishable from, yet comparable with, one another. When they suffer change they become more serviceable. He laid down an order for those creatures and how they relate to each other, that the whole might truly be called a world of perfect order.

10. At the creation first one thing was brought into existence, then another, then another and so on in turn. Last of all came man (Gen. 1:26), who was worthy of God's greater honour and consideration both before and after his creation. All the visible world was made before him for his sake. Immediately after the foundation of the world, before he existed, the kingdom of heaven was made ready for him. A divine Counsel concerning him preceded him, and he was created by God's hand and in His image. He did not take his whole being from matter or the visible world, like the other living creatures did, but only his body. His soul he took from the heavenly realms, from God Himself when He breathed life into him in a way that defies description (Gen. 2:7). Man was a great wonder surpassing all else, towering above everything, superior to all.[66] Man was capable of knowing God, as well as receiving Him and declaring Him, and was most certainly the highest achievement of the Creator's sublime majesty. He had paradise for his home, specially planted by God (Gen. 2:8ff). There it was his lot to have sight of God, speak to Him face to face and receive a counsel and commandment from Him concerning the

fasting appropriate to that place (Gen. 2:16–17). If he kept and observed this, he would remain free from death, toil and pain for ever.

11. Alas, he chose the treason of the serpent, the originator of evil, in preference to this commandment and counsel, and broke the decreed fast. Instead of eternal life he received death and instead of the place of unsullied joy he received this sinful place full of passions and misfortunes, or rather, he was sentenced to Hades and nether darkness. Our nature would have stayed in the infernal regions below the lurking places of the serpent who initially beguiled it, had not Christ come. He started off by fasting (Matt. 4:2, Luke 4:2, *cf.* Mark 1:13) and in the end abolished the serpent's tyranny, set us free and brought us back to life, as Moses foretold (Deut. 18:15, 18–19, Acts 3:22; 7:37). After fasting on the mountain Moses received tablets, the work of God (Exod. 31:18), and later received again, on a second set of tablets, the law written by the finger of God (Exod. 34:1–4). He instructed the holy nation in the law and by his work he hinted at, and showed a glimpse of, Christ's future ministry. As Moses appeared as the liberator and saviour of Abraham's race, so later Christ did the same for the whole human race.

12. Elijah, when he too had fasted forty days (1 Kgs. 19:8), saw the Lord on the mountain, not in fire, as the elders of Israel had earlier (Exod. 24:9–10, Deut. 5:23), but passing beyond the fiery vision by his God-pleasing fast, he saw the Lord in the sound of a light passing breeze (1 Kgs. 19:12 LXX).[67] He had approached more closely to our Lord's words, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). For the sound prefigured the Truth and the preaching of Him who is Truth Itself,[68] which rang out round all the ends of the earth, and the passing breeze prefigured the Spirit and grace.

13. From this vision while fasting Elijah also received power to anoint a prophet in his stead and bestow upon him a double portion of the grace he possessed, and to mount up above the earth in mid-air (2 Kgs. 2:9–11). This pointed clearly towards Christ's ascension from earth to heaven which was to happen later (Acts 1:9–11). While Christ Himself was fasting in the wilderness, He defeated our tempter by force and took away his power against mankind (Matt. 4:1–11, Mark 1:13, *cf.* Luke 4:1–13). Having at last put down his tyranny, he set our nature free and handed him over for sport to all those willing to live according to His Gospel.[69] In this way He fulfilled the words of the prophets and

by His works inscribed grace and truth upon the symbolic events which took place in ancient times.

14. You see the benefits of fasting, and how it has made us worthy of so many great gifts? Even from its opposite, unlimited eating and self-indulgence, it is possible to see the advantage of fasting. For the last two weeks our city was given over to gluttony and lack of self-restraint, and straight away we had troubles, shouting, fights, disturbances, shameless songs and obscene laughter. But this week[70] when the fast came it made everything more honourable. It took us away from frivolity's expensive cares, stopped us toiling for the sake of our useless stomachs, set us instead to works of repentance and persuaded us not to labour for the food which perishes but for the food which endures to eternal life.

15. Where now are the slaughter of animals, the aroma of roasting meat, the variety of sauces and the cooks' best endeavours? Where are the men who run around the streets and pollute the air with their impure voices? Where are those who beat the drum and make music around houses and tables, and their devotees who join in with applause and eat their fill of the food set before them to the accompaniment of kettledrums and flutes? Where are those who spend their days and nights at parties, who are always looking for places to drink, who keep each other company in drunkenness and the shameful acts that result from it? Once the fast was proclaimed all these evils went away and all things good took their place. Instead of disgusting songs, mouths now sing holy psalms. Instead of obscene laughter, there is salutary sorrow and tears. Instead of undisciplined outings and wanderings, everyone takes one and the same way to Christ's Holy Church. If unlimited eating produces a dense swarm of sins, fasting is the root of all virtues and the foundation of God's commandments.[71]

16. Lack of self-control is actually an evil both ancient and modern, though it did not precede its antidote, fasting. By means of our forefathers' self-indulgence in paradise and their contempt for the fast already in existence there, death entered the world. Sin reigned and brought in the condemnation of our nature from Adam until Christ.[72] The flood covered the whole earth because of the self-indulgence of Adam's descendants in this world of ours and their disdain for the chastity which came before. In those days God said to Noah, "My Spirit shall not abide in these men, for they are flesh" (*cf.* Gen. 6:3 Lxx). The deeds of those who are flesh are none other than unlimited eating, drunkenness,

sensual pleasure and the evils that spring from them. Because of the abominable depravity and self-indulgence among the men of Sodom, fire fell on them from heaven (Gen. 19:24). "Behold", says the prophet Ezekiel, "this was the iniquity of the men of Sodom, in fulness of bread they committed abomination" (*cf.* Ezek. 16:49–50). By means of this abomination, ignoring human nature they fell into unnatural unions. What deprived Esau, Isaac's firstborn, of his birthright and his father's blessing? Of course it was lasciviousness and an unreasonable demand for food (Gen. 25:25–34; 26:34–35, Heb. 12:16). Why were Eli's sons[73] condemned to death, and why did he meet a violent death at the news of the death of his children, whom he had not disciplined with proper care? Surely it was because they took the meat from the cauldrons before the time and used it (1 Sam. 2:12–17; 4:11, 17–18). Also, the whole Hebrew nation, while Moses was fasting on the mountain for their sake, were indulging themselves to their own detriment. They ate and drank and rose up to play, as the Scripture says (Exod. 32:6), and their sport was worshipping an idol, for it was then that the incidents surrounding the fashioning of the calf took place among them.

17. Sensual pleasure causes ungodliness as well as sin, but fasting and self-control result in the fear of God as well as virtue. Fasting must be accompanied by self-control. Why? Because eating our fill, even of humble foods, is a hindrance to the purifying mourning, godly sorrow and contrition[74] in our souls, which bring about unswerving repentance leading to salvation. For without a contrite heart we cannot really lay hold of repentance. It is the restriction of self-indulgence, sleep and the senses according to God's will that crushes our hearts[75] and makes us mourn for our sins.

18. When that rich man in the Gospel said to himself, "Eat, drink and be merry" (Luke 12:19), the wretch made himself fit for the eternal flames and unfit for this present life. Let us, on the contrary, brethren, tell ourselves to be temperate, to fast, to keep watch, to be restrained, to be humble and to suffer hardship for our salvation. Then we shall finish this present life in a good way pleasing to God and inherit the blessed life without end.

19. May we all attain to this by the grace and love towards mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory, might, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY SEVEN

ANOTHER ON FASTING[76]

THE CALM SEA, RADIANT AND BRIGHT with sparkling light, reflecting the dawn on its smooth surface, is a pleasant sight to the eyes. But it is far more delightful not just to see but to address the church gathered together according to God's will, freed from disturbances, illuminated mysteriously by the divine light, stirred up towards that light's dawn, with hands and eyes, all the senses and the mind[77] uplifted. The grace of the Spirit has today granted me this agreeable sight. You are all spending your nights and days together here in God's temple, and by your unceasing attendance upon Him you could be regarded as heavenly trees planted by the streams of the water of the Spirit. So may I now assist these streams as far as I am able. As you have offered your daytime prayers in addition to your early morning prayers, may we, as far as time allows, offer an evening sermon in addition to the one this morning, that we might show you openly all the different kinds of tricks to which the enemy of our salvation turns his hand to render not only our fasting but also our prayer worthless.

2. Brethren, there is another sort of evil satiety and drunkenness which does not result from indulging in food and drink, but from anger and hatred towards our neighbour, remembrance of wrongs,[78] and the evils that spring from these. On this subject Moses says in his song, "Their wine is the wrath of dragons and the incurable wrath of asps" (Deut. 32:33). So the prophet Isaiah says, "Woe to those who are drunken, but not with wine" (Isa. 29:9), and again he commands, "Ye shall not fast to fight" (Isa. 58:3 LXX). To those who fasted in this

way he says, speaking on the Lord's behalf, "If thou bendest thy neck as a ring, even then ye will not call this an acceptable fast, and if ye make many prayers, I shall not hearken unto you" (Isa. 58:5 LXX), and, "When ye spread forth your hands unto me, I will turn away mine eyes from you" (Isa. 1:15).

3. This is the drunkenness of hatred which more than anything else causes God to turn away, and the devil attempts to bring it about in those who pray and fast. He prompts them to remember wrongs, directs their thoughts towards harbouring malice, and sharpens their tongues for slander. He prepares them to be like that man who wishes for evil whom David describes with the words, "He deviseth mischief continually, his tongue is like a sharp rasor" (Ps. 51:2 LXX), and from whom he prays God to deliver him, saying, "Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man; they have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips" (Ps. 140:1, 3).

4. In this time of fasting and prayer, brethren, let us with all our hearts forgive anything real or imaginary we have against anyone. May we all devote ourselves to love, and let us consider one another as an incentive to love and good works, speaking in defence of one another, having good thoughts and dispositions within us before God and men. In this way our fasting will be laudable and blameless, and our requests to God while we fast will be readily received. We shall rightly call upon Him as our Father by grace and we can boldly say to Him, "Father, forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12).

5. Again, he who schemes against our souls uses another means to render our prayer and fasting useless, self-conceit.[79] Because that Pharisee was conceited when he fasted and prayed, he was sent away empty-handed (Luke 18:10-14). We know, however, that people with proud hearts are unclean and unacceptable to God, and we are well aware that we owe God many large debts and pay back very little. So let us forget those things which are behind as worthless, and reach out towards those things which lie ahead (*cf.* Phil. 3:13).[80] Let us fast and pray with contrite hearts, self-reproach and humility, that our fasting and our regular attendance and presence in God's Church may be pure and pleasing to Him.

6. Another of the evil one's methods of making our toil in fasting and prayer fruitless is to persuade us to accomplish them hypocritically for the sake of vainglory. This is why the Lord commands us in the Gospel, saying, "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut

thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:6).

7. He did not say this to encourage us to excuse ourselves from gatherings and prayers in church, because in that case the prophet and psalmist would not have said to Him, "In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Ps. 22:22), or, "I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations" (Ps. 57:9), or, "I will pay my vows before them that fear thee, Lord" (Ps. 22:25). Nor would he have said to us, "Bless ye God in the congregations" (Ps. 68:26), or, "O come, let us worship and bow down and weep before the Lord our God" (Ps. 95:6 Lxx). The Lord teaches, besides other, higher matters, of which there is no time to speak now, that if we are stirred up to pray alone in our houses and bedrooms this also encourages prayer to God in church, and inner prayer of the mind encourages spoken prayer. If someone only wants to pray when he attends God's Church, and has no concern at all for prayer at home, in the streets or in the fields, then even when he is present in church he is not really praying.

8. The psalmist demonstrates this because after saying, "My heart is ready, O God", he adds, "I will sing and give praise in my glory" (Ps. 108:1 Lxx). Elsewhere he says, "When I remember thee upon my bed, I meditate on thee in the morning hours" (Ps. 63:6 Lxx). The Scripture says, "When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:16–18).

9. How incomparable is His love for mankind! With these words the Lord makes clear to us the distinction and decision He will make at the future Judgment, so that from now we might lay hold of the better choice and portion. To those who live for vainglory and not for Him, He will definitely say, in accordance with His words in the Gospel, "You received your reward during your lifetime", just as Abraham said to that rich man in the flames, "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things" (Luke 16:25). Those who look towards Him as they practise virtue He shall, it says, reward openly, which means that in the sight of the whole world He will give them in return His blessing, an inheritance, pleasure and pure joy for ever and ever.

He wants nobody to miss this, and everybody to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4), so He makes clear now, as I said before, His impartial and unalterable choice, showing that only those who despise the glory that comes from men are sons of God.

10. He addresses the same words to both categories of people, saying, "Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:18). Those who are disdainful of the empty glory that comes from men He will make and proclaim his own adopted sons and heirs. The others He will exclude from adoption as sons unless they repent. The Lord says this lest, by considering how we look to other people when we pray and fast, which is of absolutely no benefit to us, we should endure the labour of fasting and prayer but be deprived of the reward. He tells us to anoint our heads and wash our faces, that is, we should not make a point of looking pale, nor should our heads be unwashed and dried up so that it seems that we are suffering from long drawn out fasting and contempt for our bodies, and are looking for praise from other people. The Pharisees acted like this for the sake of appearances, which is why they were estranged from Christ's Church, and the Lord forbids us categorically to copy them.

11. We can refer to the mind[81] metaphorically[82] as the head of the soul, since it is the soul's guiding force[83] and to the imaginative aspect[84] as its face, as this contains the permanent centre of the senses' activity. So it is good to anoint our heads with oil when we fast, namely, to render our minds merciful, and to wash our faces, our imaginations, clean from shameful impure thoughts, anger and everything evil. Such a fast carried out in this way banishes and puts to shame all the evil passions together with the demons who are their makers and guardians. It also enlists those who fast among good angels, turning these angels towards them, accustoming them to be their guardians and moving them to help and assist them.

12. In Babylon a fourth person was seen in the midst of the flames alongside those three young men, who were adorned with self-control and fasting, keeping them unharmed and mysteriously refreshing them (Dan. 3:25).[85] When Daniel kept a long fast an angel came to him to instruct him and to foretell the future (Dan. 10:1–21). At another time when Daniel had closed the lions' mouths by his prayer and fasting (Dan. 6:16–27), an angel carried a prophet through the air from far away to bring him food (Bel & Dr. 33–39 LXX).[86] When we practise both spiritual and bodily fasting and pray, for us too the fire

of fleshly desire will be extinguished with the help of good angels, and anger will be tamed like a lion. We will become partakers of prophetic food with hope, faith and inner vision of the good things to come, and we will be able to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy.

13. Fasting which is neither like this nor carried out in this way is more akin to the evil angels, for their own abstention from food is accompanied by anger, hatred, pride and opposition to God. As servants and helpers of the good we are their opponents. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood", says the apostle, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness" (Eph. 6:12). We do not resist them just by fasting, but we use the breastplate of righteousness to protect us, the helmet of saving works of mercy and the shield of faith (*cf.* 1 Thess. 5:8, Eph. 6:16). Also the sword of the Spirit, which is more than sufficient for defence, that is, God's saving word to us (Eph. 6:14–17). So let us fight the good fight (1 Tim. 6:12), keep the faith firm, quench all the fiery darts of the evil one (*cf.* Eph. 6:16), and, when we have been proclaimed victors in everything, we shall attain to pure heavenly crowns and rejoice eternally together with the angels in Christ Himself, our Lord.

14. To whom belong all glory, might, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY EIGHT

On Faith

INCLUDING AN EXPOSITION OF OUR DEVOUT CONFESSION[87]

BELIEVING IN GOD IS DIFFERENT from believing God. To believe God is to regard His promises to us as sure and true, but to believe in Him is to have a right understanding of Him. Both are necessary for us and we must speak correctly in both respects, in such a way that people with correct understanding can be confident that we are faithful before the God to whom our faith is directed and that, being faithful, we shall be justified by Him. "Abraham believed God", it says, "and it was counted unto Him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3, Gen. 15:6, *cf.* Gal. 3:6, Jas. 2:23). Why was Abraham counted as righteous because he believed? He had received a promise from God that in his seed, that is, in Isaac, all the tribes of Israel would be blessed (Gen. 17:16; *cf.* 26:3–5, 24). Then he was commanded by God to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:1), through whom alone the promise could be fulfilled (Gen. 17:21; 21:12), while he was still a child. Without contradicting he, the father, was hastening on his way to become his son's murderer while at the same time regarding the promise concerning his son as infallibly sure (Gen. 22:1–18).

2. Do you see what sort of faith brings justification? But Christ also promised us that we would inherit eternal life, pleasure, glory and the kingdom, while then He commanded us to be poor, to fast, to live in lowliness and affliction, to be ready to die and to crucify ourselves together with our passions and desires (*cf.* Gal. 5:24). If therefore we eagerly do these things while at the same time believing

God's promise to us, then we shall have really believed God in the way Abraham did, and it will be counted to us as righteousness.

3. Notice the consequence of these events. The fact that Abraham agreed to offer Isaac for slaughter was not just powerful evidence and proof of his faith. Because of it Christ, through whom all the tribes of the earth were blessed and the promise was fulfilled (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; *cf.* 26:4–5), was born of Abraham's seed (Matt. 1:1–16). It was as if God was under an obligation to the man who gave his only-begotten true son for His sake, to give him in return His only-begotten True Son for his sake and the sake of the promise made to him. It is exactly the same in our case. If because of God's commandments we are chaste, righteous, humble, patiently submit to every kind of evildoing and share out our possessions, if we submit our bodies to hardship through fasts and vigils, if, in a word, we crucify ourselves together with our passions and desires (*cf.* Gal. 5:24), this is not just proof that we truly believe Christ's promises, but it also, as it were, obliges God to give us in return eternal and incorruptible life and pleasure, glory and the kingdom.

4. Christ looked at His disciples and said, "Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye that mourn. Blessed are ye merciful. Blessed are ye that are persecuted for righteousness' sake" (Matt. 5:3–4, 7, 10). But "woe unto you that are rich. Woe unto you that laugh. Woe unto you that are full. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you" (Luke 6:24–26). How, I ask you, is it credible that someone believes God if he does not aspire to what the Lord pronounces blessed but to what He pronounces wretched? "Shew me", it says, "thy faith by thy works" (Jas. 2:18). And, "Who is a wise man? let him shew out of good conduct his works" (Jas. 3:13).

5. The fact that we truly believe God, that we understand that His promises and warnings to us are true and sure, even though they have not happened yet, is shown by our good works and by our keeping of His commandments. But what proof is there that we have a right belief in God, that we have a trustworthy and devout understanding of Him? It is that we confess the same faith as our God-bearing Fathers.[88] Sincerely believing God provokes opposition not only from the physical passions and the evil one's snares, but also from people in the grip of passions who lure others and drag them down with themselves into wicked pleasures. In the same way, having a right belief in the one true God provokes opposition not only from

ignorance and the enemy's promptings, but also from godless men who treacherously pull believers down into the depths of their own destruction. In both aspects of faith our greatest help comes not just from God Himself and our God-given faculty of knowledge,[89] but from the good angels and from God-fearing people who live according to His will.

6. This is why the Church of Christ, the spiritual Mother and Nurse of us all,[90] clearly and publicly celebrates today those who were illustrious in their piety and virtue, their holy Councils and the godly doctrines these Councils proclaimed. At the same time the Church briefly denounces the supporters of ungodliness and their evil pursuits and purposes,[91] so that we can turn away from them, follow those whose understanding accords with God's intention, and believe[92] in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, from whom and through whom and in whom all things were made; who is before all things and over all things and in all things and beyond all things, Unity in Trinity, Trinity in Unity, united without confusion, undividedly divided, Almighty Unity and Almighty Trinity.

7. The Father is timeless, without beginning and pre-eternal. He is the sole cause and root of the divinity beheld in the Son and the Holy Spirit; not the sole Creator, but the sole Father of the only Son and the sole producer[93] of the one Holy Spirit. He is for ever, He is the Father for ever, and He is the sole Father and the sole producer for ever.

8. His one Son is co-eternal with Him. Like Him, the Son is without beginning in time, but inasmuch as He has the Father as begetter, root, source and origin, He is not without beginning. Before all ages He alone was begotten of Him without a body, without passion or change, and was not divided from Him. Being God from God, He is not one thing as God and another as Son. He is for ever, He is the Son for ever and He is with the Father for ever without confusion. He is the living Word, the true light, the enhypostatic Wisdom,[94] cause and origin of all created things, for by Him all things were made. When the fullness of the ages had come (*cf.* Gal. 4:4), as the prophets foretold, He emptied Himself, took our human form for our sake, was conceived by the ever-virgin Mary through the gracious will of the Father and the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, and was conceived and was born. He was truly made man and became like us in everything apart from sin (*cf.* Heb. 4:15), while remaining true God in one person even after

His incarnation. He acted as God in all divine matters, as man in all human matters,[95] subjecting Himself to such human passions as are blameless.[96] Although as God He was and remained above suffering and immortal, as man He chose to suffer in the flesh for our sake, to be crucified, to die and to be buried.[97] He rose again on the third day and by His death and resurrection He destroyed him that had the power of death. After the resurrection He showed Himself, ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father, sharing the same honour and throne with Him, thereby making our nature equal with God. He will come once more in glory with this same human substance to judge the living and the dead brought back to life by the power of His coming, and He will repay each one according to his works. Knowing that what He assumed from us is both visible and circumscribed, we devoutly portray and reverence the Virgin who gave Him birth and those who have been perfectly pleasing to Him.[98] We honour and reverence the symbols of His sufferings, especially the Cross,[99] as divine trophies of victory over our common enemy. Day by day we commemorate Him as He commanded, consecrate the Holy Gifts and partake of them. First of all, in accordance with His commandment we are baptized and baptize others into the one honourable, adored name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

9. From the eternal Father who is without beginning the Holy Spirit also proceeds. As timeless He is together with the Father and the Son without beginning, but He is not without beginning, inasmuch as He has the Father as root, origin and cause, from whom He proceeded before all ages, without passion or change. He was not divided from the Father or the Son when He came from the Father and rested in the Son, for He was united with Them without confusion and indivisibly distinct. Being also God from God, He is not one thing as God and another as Comforter, inasmuch as He is the hypostatic existence of the Holy Spirit. He has His existence from the Father and is sent through the Son, as the firstfruits of eternal life and the earnest of the everlasting good things to come. He too is the cause of all created things, for in Him all things were made. He does not differ from the Father and the Son except that He is neither unbegotten nor begotten. He was sent by the Son to His disciples, that is to say, He was made known to them by the Son, for this is the only sense in which He could be sent who is everywhere present and does not leave the Sender. He is sent by the Father as well as the Son, and also

comes on His own behalf, for sending, that is to say revelation, is the common work of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

10. He is not revealed, however, in His essence, for nobody has ever seen or declared God's nature, but in the grace, power and energy[100] common to the Father, Son and Spirit. Each has His own hypostasis, and the characteristics seen to belong to that hypostasis. They have in common not only Their undisclosed essence, which is above all names and in which we cannot share, but also the grace, power, energy, radiance, incorruption, kingdom, and everything else by which God has communion with the holy angels and with men. He is united with them through grace without losing His unity and simplicity either by the division and difference between the hypostases, or the diversity and variety of the divine powers and energies.[101] So we believe in one God, in one tri-hypostatic and all-powerful Godhead, we celebrate those who have pleased God with such a faith, and we reject those who, instead of holding this faith, either started their own heresies or followed others who started them. You should be aware, brethren, that evil passions and godless doctrines open the door to one another, finding their place once God has had reason to depart.

11. The Great Paul teaches us that ungodliness makes room for a dense swarm of sins when he writes of the Greeks, "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (Rom. 1:28), "but when they knew God, they glorified him not as God neither honoured him" (*cf.* Rom. 1:21), "God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, covetousness and the like" (Rom. 1:28). The fact that sin opens the door to ungodliness is proved by the many wretched people who suffered in the way. When Solomon had surrendered himself to physical pleasures he slid into idolatry (1 Kgs. 11:1–6). Once Jeroboam had been utterly overcome by love of power he sacrificed to the golden calves (2 Kgs. 10:29, *cf.* 2 Chr. 13:8). And Judas the traitor, sick with love of money, sank to murdering God (Matt. 26:15).

12. Faith without works is dead and chaotic, and works without faith are empty and useless. Today, in this noble season of fasting and virtuous effort, the grace of the Holy Spirit has combined the celebration of those who taught the word of our faith correctly with the denunciation of those who chose to do otherwise.[102] This is so that we, eagerly pursuing both faith and works together, may show our faith by our works and carry off the prize for our labours through faith.

13. Evil passions and godlessness not only open the door to one another, they are also similar. I should like to say a little to your charity about the non-Orthodox believers who have appeared in our day.[103] Adam was given authority by God to eat from every tree in paradise but he was not satisfied with them all. Once he had been convinced by the counsel of the serpent, the originator of evil, he ate from that one tree which he had been commanded not to touch. In the same way God sets before us all His riches and truly beneficial gifts to share if we wish, in accordance with the words, "The person who has been deified by grace will be in every respect as God is, except for His very essence."[104] There are, however, people who teach that we can also share in God's supraessential essence and proclaim that this essence can be authoritatively named. They imitate the serpent, the originator of evil, by misinterpreting and distorting the words of the saints just as he did to the words of God. But we have received power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. Without difficulty we can crush all the tricks and snares he devises against piety and the devout way of life. And when we have openly gained the victory over him in every respect we shall attain to heavenly and incorruptible crowns of righteousness in Christ Himself, to the impartial Judge who gives to each his due.

14. To whom belong all glory, honour and worship, with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY NINE

In the Time of Fasting and Prayer[105]

THE FINAL OUTCOME OF GODLY DOCTRINES, and the effort and consideration devoted to this subject, is truth and steadfast faith which are in harmony and agreement with our God-bearing Fathers. On the other hand, this is the starting point, not the final outcome, of active virtue,[106] and if it fails to achieve the appropriate end, it will make the judgment against the believer more severe. "He that knew", it says, "his lord's will, and did not do it, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luke 12:47). So relevant knowledge and truth are insufficient to achieve active virtue, but its outcome is the highest Good.

2. If we saw people being faithful to what they knew to be right, putting it into practice and being made good themselves by their deeds, without offending against their souls' good sense, then we would not have much to say about honest behaviour, chastity, self-control and the like. Everyone knows that all these are good, and that a life of self-control, which experience shows time and time again to be beneficial for both soul and body, is even better. The majority are fully aware of this, but desire and anger get the better of this beneficial knowledge. "For I see", says the apostle, "another law warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:23). That is why, brethren, we continually offer you words of encouragement, to stir you up to add good actions to your unswerving, honest thoughts, because this is what brings knowledge of what is right to good effect. "A good understanding", says David, "have all they that do it" (Ps. 111:10). And "His righteousness is unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember

his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:17–18). Paul says, "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13). And the Lord of both David and Paul says, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).

3. Brethren, by our actions let us lay hold of the benefit of fasting and self-control. Let us prove our good disposition towards them and give a practical demonstration of the fruit they bear. "For every tree is known by his own fruit" (Luke 6:44), and, "The husbandman must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say", says the apostle (2 Tim. 2:6–7). Each of the other virtues cleanses and adorns either the soul or the body, or rather, just one part of the soul or body. The mind is cleansed and adorned by prayer and knowledge, anger by meekness, and desire by chastity. But fasting and self-control lull the stirrings of the body and quench the raging of anger and desire. They make the understanding like a clear, cloudless sky, cleansing it from the rising vapours which result from large quantities of food, and the melancholy which they cause.[107] The outward man perishes through fasting and self-control, but the more he does so, the more the inward man is renewed, as the apostle tells us (2 Cor. 4:16). Someone has said, "A fat belly does not bring forth a fine mind."[108] A belly refined by fasting and self-control, however, necessarily refines the mind as well.

4. Everything noble and good is accomplished and perfected by these means. Fasting and self-control are a double wall of defence and whoever lives within them enjoys great peace, like someone inside Jerusalem, for the name Jerusalem means peace.[109] The head cook[110] of the ruler of Babylon makes war against this wall, and unless he finds those inside strongly defending the walls he razes them to the ground, bringing culinary delights into action as engines of destruction (*cf.* 2 Kgs. 25:8–21, Jer. 52:12–27).

5. If the people on the walls not only despise rich and varied food but are extremely frugal even in making bread, then they can overturn the tent of Midian by their self-control, rather as the story of Gideon foreshadows. "Lo", it says, "a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian." The barley bread shows how frugal and restrained, even in necessary food, were the men fighting alongside Gideon. "And it came", it says, "unto the tent of Midian, and smote it and overturned it" (Judg. 7:13). Without doubt the tent overturned by a barley cake is the voracious appetite of the gullet and stomach, the force of which is taken away by fasting and plain fare. Daniel, a man

subject to desires, did more than just destroy with a cake the dragon (Bel & Dr. 23–27 Lxx), the god of those whose god is the belly, who has power over the loins and the navel.[111] He also, after not having eaten the bread of desires or drunk wine for many weeks, saw strange visions and was attended by an archangel (Dan. 10:1–21).

6. Having spoken of Daniel, we turn now to that greedy and ungrateful race who said, "Who shall give us flesh to eat? Now our soul is dried away" (Num. 11:4–6). When they had eaten so much that it was coming out at their nostrils, they suffered a terrible blow. "The wrath of the Lord", it says, "was kindled against the people, and their satiety became for them a very great plague" (Num. 11:33). The so-called "graves of greed"[112] in that place are a monument to God's wrath against them (Num. 11:34), and with this in view we should flee gluttony, embrace self-control, and welcome these days of fasting with open arms, because they make the body obedient to the soul and lighten the mind in its ascent to God. John the Forerunner of Grace was content all his life long with locusts and wild honey (Matt. 3:4, Mark 1:6). Peter used only salted olives, lupin seeds and light vegetables.[113] To say nothing of Paul who, in his own words, lived "in hunger and thirst, in fastings often" (2 Cor. 11:27).

7. The forty day period of the fast is not your whole life, and every day your fasting ends when the sun sets.[114] Going without food to this extent is surely easy and reasonable for nearly everyone.[115] But when we eat let it also be with moderation, so that fasting and eating within due limits, we may not lag far behind those who do not eat at all. Perhaps you spare your flesh and avoid fasting in case you waste away. The opposite is true. Eating your fill unavoidably gives rise to gout, headaches and other illnesses, whereas fasting is the mother of good health.[116] It seems that the fornicator is not the only one who sins against his own body, for the glutton also offends against his body by making it sickly and diseased.

8. We indulge ourselves through all our senses, so let us impose self-control on them all. If you abstain from food while your sight lures you into adultery, inquisitiveness and malice in the hidden place of your soul, your hearing is open to insulting words, lewd songs and evil slanders, and your other senses are open to whatever harms them, what is the benefit of your fasting? None whatsoever. For the evil which you avoid with one of your senses, you let into your soul through another. We are made up of a soul and a body, and both soul

and body consist of many members. For the soul too has members after a fashion: those parts of it concerned with growth, desiring, anger and reason.[117] Therefore true fasting must extend to every part, cleansing and healing them all. Fasting, brethren, gently and kindly restores the soul to health, and that is why our Fathers imposed it on us during these days.

9. If we shrink from fasting in our foolishness, hell waits to punish us, to cut us down and burn us, at that time when Christ will cut in pieces anyone incapable of being healed[118] and consign them to the unquenchable fire to suffer eternal punishment. It was because we did not fast in paradise that we were thrown out into this life full of sufferings. In the same way, if we have not fasted here or lived with as much self-restraint as we could, we shall fall into that unquenchable and unbearable hell-fire.

10. The prophecy says, "Be converted, O backsliding children" (Jer. 3:14). For those who change their ways, nothing helps more than fasting towards forgiveness of their sins, as we learn from the conversion of the Ninevites (Jonah 3:5). But nothing is more deadly than gluttony. This is shown by the fact that the father said of the prodigal who returned, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:24). He had embraced a piggish way of life and enjoyed the pig's filth. He was thrown together with them and, once he had cast aside his likeness to God, he became like them. According to the great Job, on the other hand, he resembled not only animals but completely unfeeling plants in watery places, the rushes, papyrus and reeds where the all-devouring Leviathan sleeps (Job 41:1). For this invisible monster is dependent on moist food. When David had rid himself of this moist lushness by his temperate life he said, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; my bones are parched like brushwood; my knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness" (Pss. 22:15; 102:3; 109:24). The right hand of the Most High had been alienated from him, but he transformed this situation by dedicating himself completely to the Lord, regarding himself as facing Him at all times, and setting Him always before him as the meditation of his heart.

11. Let us imitate David, brethren, and not only turn our backs on lush and dissipated living, but undertake fasts, psalmody and prayers, as if God Himself were present and watching. We know that fasting, psalmody and prayer by themselves cannot save us, but carrying

them out before God can. For when the Lord's eyes are upon us they sanctify us, as the sun warms everything upon which it shines.

12. When our understanding gazes intently on God and, while looking towards Him, fasts, sings psalms and prays, then we are carrying out these actions before God. If during prayer and psalmody our mind is sometimes directed towards God and sometimes slips away and floats about, it is necessary to realize that we have not yet dedicated ourselves completely to God and that the purpose behind our actions is not wholly in accordance with the law of the Lord. The more we fall short in righteous works, the less we are able to remain in God's sight. "The lawless", it says, "shall not stand in thy sight" (Ps. 5:5 LXX). All the same, when we lie wounded let us call upon the Lord who can soothe and bind up our injuries.

13. Please do not let us give up calling upon Him with fasting, vows, tears and every other means, until He draws near and heals us. We should show by our deeds that we have Christ as our bridegroom and we wait for Him in hope, although He is far away from us for the present, hidden in the realms of heaven. "When the bridegroom", it says, "shall be taken from them, then shall they fast" (Matt. 9:15). Clearly those called by Christ's name must pass their whole lives in self-control and fasting, looking forward with good hope to His terrible coming again. Let us fast particularly at this time, and prepare ourselves in every possible way while we wait for the yearly commemoration of Christ's resurrection, that being cleansed we may glorify His passion with all purity and attain the blessed immortal life which the Lord achieved for us by this means.

14. May we all attain to this, by the grace and love towards mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belong all glory, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY TEN

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF HOLY LENT[119] ON THE SUBJECT OF THE PARALYSED MAN HEALED BY THE LORD IN CAPERNAUM

AND DIRECTED AT THOSE WHO HAVE ILL-TIMED CONVERSATIONS WITH ONE ANOTHER DURING CHURCH GATHERINGS

I SHALL INTRODUCE MY HOMILY to your charity today with the Lord's own words, the quintessence, in fact, of the Gospel preaching: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17; *cf.* 3:2 and Mark 1:15). Not only is it at hand, but it is in us, for the Lord also says, "The kingdom of heaven is within you" (Luke 17:21). Nor is it merely within you, for before long it will come more openly to abolish every principality, power and might (*cf.* Eph. 1:21), and to grant invincible strength, inexhaustible riches and unchanging, incorruptible and unending enjoyment, glory and might solely to those who live according to God's will and have passed their time here in a way that pleases Him.

2. Since the kingdom of God is at hand and within us and will soon arrive, let us make ourselves worthy of it by works of repentance. Let us exercise force on ourselves, driving away evil prejudices and habits. For the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force (Matt. 11:12). We should emulate the patience, humility and faith of our God-bearing Fathers. "Whose faith follow", it says, "considering the end of their manner of life" (Heb. 13:7). Let us mortify those parts of us which belong to the earth: fornication, impurity, evil passion and covetousness, especially during these holy days of the

fast. This is why the grace of the Spirit taught us first about God's terrible Judgment which is to come, then reminded us of Adam's exile, and afterwards pointed out to us the faith that is surest of all.[120] For fear of the Judgment and in grief at the exile, we should hold fast to the faith, humble ourselves and neither yield to self-indulgence, nor open the door to all the passions and make room for them by means of our unbelieving, insatiable stomachs. This would mean following the wide and easy way, destroying ourselves with pleasure. Since we love the strait and narrow way which leads to life, and fasting is its starting point and first furlong, let us vigorously make our way through these forty days of fasting.

3. "To every thing there is a season", according to Solomon, "and a time to every purpose" (Eccles. 3:1). If anyone is looking for the right season to practise virtue, it is now, in these forty days. Our whole life is intended as a suitable means of attaining salvation, but this season of fasting is more especially so. Christ, the author and giver of our salvation, began by fasting. During that period, the devil, the inventor of the passions, attacked Him in all kinds of ways, but He overthrew him and put him to shame (Matt. 4:1–11, Mark 1:13, *cf.* Luke 4:1–13). Just as failing to restrain the stomach[121] destroys the virtues and is the mother of passionateness,[122] so self-control destroys the stains caused by self-indulgence and is the mother of dispassion.[123] If it is the case that self-indulgence has given rise both now and in the past to passions which were not yet within us, it will without doubt increase and strengthen any that are there already, whereas fasting weakens them and makes them disappear. Fasting and self-control are yoked together, though at different times one or the other may be more advantageous to those who pursue them with understanding.

4. Let us not now unyoke these two. During the five noble weekdays which intervene let us hold more firmly to fasting, then on Saturdays and Sundays we should be more intent on self-control than on fasting,[124] so that we may listen attentively to the words of the Gospel. Today these words tell us about the miraculous healing of the paralysed man; not the healing which the Lord performed in Jerusalem (John 5:1–15),[125] but the one in Capernaum (Mark 2:1–12, *cf.* Matt. 9:1–8, Luke 5:17–26). In those days, says Mark, "Jesus again entered into Capernaum after some days" (Mark 2:1). Matthew calls Capernaum the Lord's own city, because when he tells the story of this paralysed man he says, "Jesus came into his own city" (Matt. 9:1).

When He had been baptized by John in the Jordan and the Spirit had flown down upon Him from heaven, He was led out into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted (Matt. 4:1–11, Mark 1:13, *cf.* Luke 4:1–13). After His victory over the tempter, He came up and went round teaching near the Jordan. The Baptist bore witness to Him in many different ways, until the time that John was imprisoned by Herod (Matt. 4:11–12). Then, as Matthew says, "He departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast" (Matt. 4:13).

5. From there He used to go out into the desert places in order to pray, and into the small towns nearby to preach, then He would return to Capernaum. For that reason the evangelist Matthew referred to it as His own city. Mark, on the other hand, says, "He again entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door" (Mark 2:1–2). Since He spent most of His time there, He was extremely well known on account of His many great miracles and words, and the people had an especial longing for Him. When they heard that He was there once more, everybody flocked. According to Luke, they came from every city (Luke 8:4), and there were scribes, Pharisees and doctors of the law among them. "And he preached", it says, "the word unto them" (Mark 2:2). Such was His principle work, as He showed by saying in a parable, "The sower went out to sow his seed" (Luke 8:5), namely, the word of His teaching. He also says, "I am come to call sinners to repentance" (Matt. 9:13), calling them through the word of His teaching. Paul, too, makes this clear, saying, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

6. Publicly and without reproaching[126] anyone, He preached to all the word of repentance, the Gospel of salvation and the words of eternal life. Everyone heard but not everyone obeyed. For although we all love listening and watching, not all of us love virtue. By nature we all long to know about salvation as well as everything else. So people in general are not only pleased to listen to sacred teaching, but also enjoy passing their opinions on the words, each one apparently scrutinising what is said, according to how ignorant or wise he may be. Putting the words into action, however, or reaping from them the fruit of beneficial faith, requires gratitude and good intent, which are not easy to find, especially among people who consider themselves

righteous and are wise in their own opinion, as were the Jewish scribes and Pharisees.

7. They stayed there, heard the word and saw the miracles performed, but instead of commending the one who did good by His words and actions, they blasphemed against Him. While the Lord was teaching and everyone, or nearly everyone, was standing and taking in the gracious words which came from His mouth, "Certain men come", it says, "unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where the Lord was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay" (Mark 2:3–4). You might think that the faith of those doing the carrying accomplished everything, and that the Lord went on to heal the paralysed man because He was satisfied with their faith (*cf.* Mark 2:5). It seems to me, however, that the reality was different. It is true that when the Lord healed the servant of the Centurion,[127] He did not look for faith on the part of the servant (Matt. 8:6–13, Luke 7:1–10). Nor did He look for faith either from the Canaanite woman's daughter (Matt. 15:22–28, Mark 7:24–30) or from Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:21–43, Luke 8:40–56, *cf.* Matt. 9:18–26), because He was satisfied with the faith of those who approached Him on their behalf. Of these three, however, Jairus' daughter had died, the Canaanite woman's daughter was beside herself, and the servant was not even present. The paralysed man, by contrast, was present and in his right mind, although his body was paralysed. It seems more likely to me, therefore, that his bearers accepted faith in the Lord and ventured to approach Him as a result of the paralysed man's own hopefulness and faith. Persuaded by him, they took him and carried him up on the roof and let him down from there in front of the Lord. They could not have done this against his wishes. Obviously being racked with paralysis had broken down, not his reason, but all barriers and obstacles to faith.

8. It was love of human honour that distanced the Pharisees from faith in the Lord, which is why He said to them, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44). Others were prevented from drawing near by lands, weddings, or worries about the affairs of this life (Luke 14:18–20), but the paralysed man's physical weakness put an end to such things and removed them from his thoughts. There are times when illness is better for sinners than good health, because it helps them towards salvation and blunts their inborn evil impulses.

Inasmuch as it repays the debt of sins by means of suffering, it makes them able to receive healing of their souls in the first instance, then healing of their bodies. This happens most of all when the sick person, understanding that the affliction is a remedy from God, bears it courageously, falls down before God with faith and asks for forgiveness, through whatever works he can manage. This was shown by the paralysed man who did what he could, and proved by the Lord's own words and actions. The Pharisees, however, were incapable of comprehending, and blasphemed and murmured among themselves (Mark 2:6–7). "When Jesus", it says, "saw their faith", the faith, that is, of the bed-ridden man who had been lowered, and of those who had let him down from the roof, "he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5).

9. What a blessed way to be addressed! He hears himself called "son" and is adopted as the child of the heavenly Father. He is joined to God who is without sin, having immediately become sinless himself through the forgiveness of his sins. In order that his body can subsequently be renewed, his soul first receives deliverance from sin from the Lord, who knows that in the beginning when the soul fell into the snares of sin, physical illness and death followed, in accordance with His righteous judgment.

10. But when the scribes heard, "They reasoned", it says, "in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mark 2:6–7). As the Creator of men's hearts, the Lord knew the secret thoughts in the scribes' hearts, and said to them, "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?" (Mark 2:8–9). It seemed to the scribes that the Lord was unable to heal the paralysed man, so He had resorted to something obscure, forgiving him his sins. Just to pronounce words of forgiveness, especially in such an authoritative and commanding way, was blasphemy; but it was also something easy that anyone could do. That is why the Lord said to them, "If I wanted to utter empty words without any practical outcome, it would be just as easy to declare that the paralysed man should rise from his bed as that his sins were forgiven, both statements being of no effect. But so that you may know that my word is not ineffectual, and that I did not resort to forgiving his sins because I was incapable of granting him healing of his illness, but that I have divine power on earth as

the Son who is of one substance with the Father in heaven, although, according to the flesh, I have become of one substance with your ungrateful selves",[128] He then says to the paralysed man, "I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all" (Mark 2:11–12).

11. Although Christ's words and the miracle were at odds with the scribes' reasoning, in some ways they agreed with it. They show that no human being is able in his own right to forgive sins. They also show, however, that the Pharisees' opinion that Christ was merely a man, not almighty God, was false and devoid of understanding. Something that no one had ever seen or heard of had now come to light. Christ was both God and man, twofold in nature and energy.[129] On the one hand He spoke as a man like us, on the other hand as God He accomplished whatever He pleased through His word and command alone. He confirmed by His deeds that in the beginning, according to the psalmist, "He spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9). Now the deed immediately followed His word. The paralysed man stood up at once, "and took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed" (Mark 2:12). Often men can bring about by a word the forgiveness of the sins of someone who offends against them. But only God can put to flight such an illness as this merely by a word of command. The evangelist remarks that everyone watching was amazed and glorified God, for it was clearly He who had done this wonder. They glorified Him who does innumerable glorious and extraordinary works, saying, "We never saw it on this fashion" (Mark 2:12).

12. They said that they had never seen anything like this, glorifying God by their words and showing that this miracle was greater than any previous ones. But we are unable to say the same now, for we have seen many much greater miracles performed not only by Christ but also by His disciples and their successors, just by calling upon Christ's name. Let us then, brethren, glorify Him now by our actions, regarding this miracle anagogically[130] as a pattern for virtue. Anyone addicted to sensual pleasures is paralysed in his soul, and is lying sick on the bed of voluptuousness[131] with its deceptive bodily ease. Once, however, he has been won over by the exhortations in the Gospel, he confesses his sins and triumphs over them and the paralysis they have brought upon his soul. He is taken up and brought to the Lord by

these four: self-condemnation, confession of former sins, promising to renounce evil ways from now on, and prayer to God. They cannot, however, bring him near to God without uncovering the roof, scattering the tiles, earth and other building material. Our roof is the reasoning part of the soul, which is set above everything else within us.[132] But it has lying on top of it, like a large quantity of building material, its connection with the passions and earthly matters. Once this connection has been loosed and shaken off by means of the four things we have mentioned, then we can really be let down, that is, humbled, fall down before the Lord, draw near to Him and ask and receive His healing.

13. When did these acts of repentance take place? At the time when Jesus came to His own city, which means, after He came in the flesh to stay in the world which He created and is therefore His own. As the evangelist says of Him, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11–12). So when we fall down before Him with such faith, our paralysed mind immediately hears Him saying "Son", and receives forgiveness and healing. In addition it receives strength to lift up and carry the bed on which it is lying. The bed is to be understood as the body to which the mind which pursues fleshly desires clings, and through which it applies itself to sinful actions.

14. After being healed, our mind has our body under control and leads and carries it about. Through it our mind brings to light the fruits and works of repentance, so that all who see them glorify God. For they see that yesterday's publican is today's evangelist, the persecutor an apostle, the thief a theologian. Even the man who used to live among pigs, if you please, is now the son of the heavenly Father. Having planned in their hearts ways to ascend, they advanced "from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18), progressing day by day towards excellence. The Lord says to His disciples, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). He does not say this to urge them to show off, but to urge them to organize their lives as is pleasing to God. Just as light effortlessly attracts people's gaze, so a way of life pleasing to God draws their minds along with their eyes. We do not praise the air which shares in the brilliance of the sunlight, but the sun which is the source of this brilliance and bestows it on us. Even if we do praise

the air for its brightness, we praise the sun much more. So it is when someone makes the brilliance of the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2) visible through his virtuous deeds. As soon as anyone looks at him, they are immediately led towards the glory of the Father in heaven of Christ, the Sun of righteousness.

15. Leaving aside for now the higher virtues, when I am standing with you before God in the holy church and I turn round and see people offering up hymns and prayers to God with understanding and contrition, or someone standing silently listening in deep thought, then this sight alone immediately inspires me, my soul is filled with delight and I glorify Christ, our Father in heaven. For without Him nobody can do anything good (*cf.* John 15:5), and all men's attainments are due to Him.

16. But what can I say to those people who neither stand in silence, nor join in the singing, but instead meet one another and mix our reasonable worship of God with worldly chatter? They do not listen themselves to the divinely inspired words, and prevent others who want to listen from doing so. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" as Elijah the Tishbite would say (1 Kgs. 18:21). You want simultaneously to come together for prayer and for worldly, ill-timed words. Of course you succeed in neither purpose, because you destroy the one with the other, or rather, they destroy each other. How long before you stop talking idly in this place? You make this house of prayer into a place of business or impassioned speech (*cf.* Matt. 21:13, Mark 11:17, Luke 19:46). In this house the words of eternal life are both spoken and heard, on the one hand by us, as we beseech God for eternal life with unashamed hope, and on the other hand by God, as He gives eternal life to those who ask with their whole heart and mind. But he will certainly not give it to those who do not even apply their whole tongue, as it were, to asking.

17. Nowadays, brethren, our sacrifice to God is not accomplished through fire, as in the time of Moses, but through words. In those days, when God used to receive the sacrifice carried up by fire, when Korah and his fellow-rebels against Moses offered strange fire from outside, they were completely burnt up by the holy fire which spontaneously sprang out at them (Num. 16:31–35). We should be afraid lest, when we bring strange words from outside into this place of sacrifice, by which I mean the church, we should be condemned once and for all by the divine words there. For by so doing we shall have made

ourselves liable to hear that abominable voice which pronounces our condemnation. Let us instead be afraid, and as long as we are here let us stand with fear before God and make our supplication. After leaving this place, we should give proof of the resulting change for the better in our ways. We should not be enslaved to gains, especially if they are dishonest. We should avoid oaths, especially false ones. We should renounce shameless words, and shameless actions even more so, slander, cunning and arrogance. By means of godly prudence of mind, we should train and motivate every part of our body and all our senses, leading our body upwards with godly reasoning and fear. We must not let our body bring us down and overpower us by its own servile and disgusting appetites. As we have learnt from Paul, we know that if we live after the flesh we shall die, but if through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live for ever (Rom. 8:13).

18. Let us stir up all who see us to glorify God as they recognize that this house has Christ within it, who gives strength to those whose souls are paralysed and commands them to lift up and offer up to Him, with a spiritual understanding pleasing to God, their physical senses and perceptions, instead of being mindlessly carried away and brought down by them. In this way they will go into the house that is really ours, by which I mean the country in and above the heavens, where Christ now is, the Heir and Bestower of our inheritance.

19. To whom belong glory, might, honour and worship, with His Father without beginning and the holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY ELEVEN

ON THE PRECIOUS AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS[133]

THE CROSS OF CHRIST was mysteriously proclaimed in advance and foreshadowed from generations of old and no one was ever reconciled with God except by the power of the Cross. After our First Parents transgressed against God through the tree in paradise, sin came to life, but we died, submitting, even before physical death, to the death of the soul, its separation from God. After the transgression we lived in sin and according to the flesh. Sin "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7–8).

2. As the apostle says, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17). God, however, is Spirit, absolute Goodness and Virtue, and our own spirit is after His image and likeness, although sin has made it good for nothing. So how could anyone at all be spiritually renewed and reconciled with God, unless sin and life according to the flesh had been abolished? The Cross of Christ is this abolition of sin. One of our God-bearing Fathers was asked by an unbeliever if he really believed in Christ crucified. "Yes", he replied, "I believe in Him who crucified sin."[134] God Himself has borne witness that there were many who were His friends before and after the law, when the Cross had not yet been revealed. David, the king and prophet, says, as if there were definitely friends of God in his day, "How precious also are thy friends unto me, O God!" (Ps. 139:17 LXX). I shall now show you, if you listen attentively for the love of God, how it was that people were called friends of God before the Cross.

3. Although the man of sin, the son of lawlessness (*cf.* 2 Thess. 2:3), by which I mean Antichrist, has not yet come, the theologian whom Christ

loved says, "Even now, Beloved, there is antichrist" (*cf.* 1 John 2:18). In the same way, the Cross existed in the time of our ancestors, even before it was accomplished. The great Paul teaches us absolutely clearly that Antichrist is among us, even though he has not yet come, saying, "His mystery doth already work in you" (*cf.* 2 Thess. 2:7). In exactly the same way Christ's Cross was among our forefathers before it came into being, because its mystery was working in them.

4. Leaving aside Abel, Seth, Enos, Enoch, Noah, and all those up until Noah who were pleasing to God, and their contemporaries, I shall begin with Abraham, who was called the father of many nations, the Jews' father after the flesh and ours by faith. As I am to start with this spiritual father of ours, his good beginning and God's initial call to him, what were the first words God spoke to him? "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, unto a land that I will show thee" (Gen. 12:1). This utterance certainly bears within it the mystery of the Cross, for it is exactly what Paul says when he glories in the Cross: "The world is crucified unto me" (Gal. 6:14). When someone has fled his home country or the world without turning back, for him his country according to the flesh and the world have been put to death and ceased to exist, and this is the Cross.[135]

5. God said to Abraham, before he had fled from his life with ungodly men, "Get thee out of thy country unto a land", not, that I will give thee, but "that I will show thee" (Gen. 12:1), so that through this land another, spiritual land might be shown. What were God's first words to Moses once he had fled from Egypt and ascended the mountain? "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet" (Exod. 3:5). This is another mystery of the Cross which follows appropriately upon the first. "You have come out of Egypt", says God, "you have left the service of Pharaoh, and have despised the fact that you were called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. That world of evil servitude has been dissolved and ceased to exist, as far as you are concerned. Nevertheless you still need something more." What can that be? "To take your shoes from off your feet, to lay aside the coats of skins (*cf.* Gen. 3:21) with which sin clothed you and in which it is at work, separating you from the holy ground. Take these shoes from your feet", which is to say, "do not live any longer according to the flesh and in sin, but let that life which is opposed to God be abolished and put to death. And let the way of thinking based on the flesh (*cf.* Rom. 8:6–7), and the law in your members warring against the law of your mind, and bringing you into

captivity to the law of sin (Rom. 7:23–8:2), no longer hold sway, nor be active, for it has been put to death by the power of this vision of God." Surely this is the Cross. In the divine Paul's words, the Cross is to have crucified "the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24).

6. "Put off", He says, "thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exod. 3:5). These words to Moses revealed that the earth was to be hallowed through the Cross after the manifestation of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. At that time, as he looked at that great spectacle of the burning bush which seemed cool as the dew, Moses foresaw the coming of Christ, which was then in the future. The vision in God of the Cross is a mystery greater than that earlier mystery. The great Paul and our holy Fathers hint that there are two mysteries. For Paul not only says, "The world is crucified unto me", but adds, "and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14). The Fathers, for their part, command us not to hasten to ascend the cross before the Cross, as though there were definitely two words of the Cross and two mysteries.

7. The first mystery of the Cross is flight from the world, and parting from our relatives according to the flesh, if they are a hindrance to piety and a devout life, and training our body, which Paul tells us is of some value (1 Tim. 4:8). In these ways the world and sin are crucified to us, once we have fled from them. According to the second mystery of the Cross, however, we are crucified to the world and the passions, once they have fled from us. It is not of course possible for them to leave us completely and not be at work in our thoughts, unless we attain to contemplation of God.[136] When, through action,[137] we approach contemplation and cultivate and cleanse our inner man, searching for the divine treasure which we ourselves have hidden, and considering the kingdom of God within us, then it is that we crucify ourselves to the world and the passions. Through meditation[138] of this a certain warmth[139] is born in our heart, which chases away evil thoughts like flies, instills spiritual peace and consolation in our soul, and bestows sanctification on our body. As the psalmist says, "My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned" (Ps. 39:3). One of our God-bearing Fathers taught us about this, saying, "Strive as hard as you can to ensure that your inner labour is according to God's will, and you will conquer the outward passions."[140] The great Paul, urging us on in the same direction, says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). Elsewhere he exhorts, "Stand

therefore, having your loins girt about with truth" (Eph. 6:14). For the contemplative part of the soul[141] strengthens and supports the part concerned with desires,[142] and chases away fleshly lusts. The great Peter tells us with absolute clarity what the references to the loins and the truth mean. "Wherefore", he says, "gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13).

8. Since it is not possible for the evil passions and the world to leave us completely and not be at work in our thoughts, unless we attain to contemplation of God,[143] inasmuch as such contemplation is also the mystery of the Cross, which crucifies those who are worthy of it to the world. That vision which Moses had of the burning bush not consumed by the fire, was also a mystery of the Cross, greater and more perfect than the mystery in the time of Abraham. Is it then the case that Moses was initiated into the more perfect mystery of the Cross, whereas Abraham was not? That would be unreasonable. In fact, Abraham was not initiated at the time when he was called, but afterwards he was, once, twice, and in fact many times, though we do not have enough time to relate everything now.

9. I shall remind you of Abraham's most wonderful vision of God, when he clearly saw the one God in three persons,[144] before He had been proclaimed to be such (Gen. 18:1–16 LXX). "The Lord appeared unto him by the oak of Mamre;[145] and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him: and he ran to meet them." He actually saw the one God who appeared to him as three. "God appeared unto him", it says, "and, lo, three men." Having run to meet the three men, however, he addressed them as one, saying, "My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away from thy servant." The three then discourse with him as though they were one. "And he said to Abraham, Where is Sarah thy wife? I will certainly return unto thee about this same time of year: and Sarah thy wife shall have a son." As the aged Sarah laughed on hearing this, "the Lord said, Wherefore did Sarah laugh?" Notice that the one God is three hypostases,[146] and the three hypostases are one Lord, for it says, "The Lord said".

10. This is how the mystery of the Cross worked in Abraham. As for Isaac, he himself prefigured Him who was nailed to the Cross for, like Christ, he was obedient to his father unto death. The ram offered instead of him (Gen. 22:13) clearly foreshadowed the Lamb of God who was led to the slaughter for our sake. Even the thicket in

which the ram was caught contained the mystery of the sign of the Cross, for it was called the thicket of "Sabek", meaning the thicket of forgiveness (Gen. 22:13 LXX), just as the Cross was called the wood of salvation. In Isaac's son, Jacob, the mystery and sign of the Cross were also at work, for he increased his flocks by means of wood and water (Gen. 30:37–43). The wood prefigured the wood of the Cross, and the water, holy baptism, which holds within it the mystery of the Cross. "We were baptized into Christ's death", says the apostle (Rom. 6:3). Christ, too, increased His human flocks by means of wood and water, the Cross and baptism.

11. When Jacob bowed himself upon the end of his staff and blessed his grandchildren with his hands crossed (Gen. 48:9–20), he brought the sign of the Cross even more clearly to light. Because he was obedient to his forefathers from start to finish, he was beloved and blessed, even though Esau hated him for this. He bore every temptation with courage, and the mystery of the Cross was at work throughout his whole life. That is why God said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:13, *cf.* Mal. 1:2–3). Something similar, brethren, happens in our case. When someone obeys his earthly and spiritual fathers in accordance with the apostolic commandment saying, "Children, obey your parents" (Eph. 6:1), he is loved by God as having become in this respect like His beloved Son (Matt. 3:17; 17:5, Mark 1:11; 9:7, Luke 3:22; 9:35, 2 Pet. 1:17). But the disobedient son is hateful to God because he is a stranger to any resemblance to His beloved Son. Solomon the wise man makes it clear that this does not just apply to Jacob and Esau, but to everyone at all times. "An obedient son", he says, "is unto life: but the disobedient is unto destruction" (Prov. 13:1 LXX).[147]

12. Surely Jacob, the son of obedience, attained to the greater mystery of the Cross, by which I mean the vision of God[148] through which a person is more perfectly crucified to sin, dies to it and lives to virtue? He actually bears witness himself to his vision and his salvation. "For I have seen God", he says, "face to face, and my soul is saved" (Gen. 32:30 LXX). Where are the people who still go along with the loathsome prattle of those heretics who have appeared in our day?[149] Let them hear that Jacob saw God's face, and not only did he not lose his life but, as he says himself, he was also saved, even though God said, "There shall no man see me, and live" (Exod. 33:20). Surely there cannot be two Gods, one whose face can be seen by the saints, the other

whose face is above vision. Perish the impious thought! The face of God visible at the time of His manifestation to those who are worthy, is His energy and grace.[150] Whereas His face which is never seen is what is sometimes called the nature of God, and is beyond the scope of any manifestation or vision. As it is written, "No one hath stood in the substance and essence of the Lord" (Jer. 23:18 LXX), and either seen God's nature or made it known.[151] So contemplation in God and the sacred mystery of the Cross do not just drive away evil passions, and the devils who devise them, from the soul, but also heretical doctrines. They refute the advocates of such ideas, and thrust them outside the boundaries of Christ's Holy Church, within which we have the privilege now to celebrate and declare the grace and energy of the Cross among our Fathers in the time before the Cross.

13. The mystery of the Cross was working in Abraham, whereas his son Isaac himself prefigured the one who was afterwards crucified. In the same way, the mystery of the Cross was at work throughout Jacob's life, while Jacob's son Joseph was himself a type[152] and mystery of the divine and human Word who was later crucified. Joseph was led to the slaughter through jealousy, by his kinsmen according to the flesh, for whose sake his father sent him, just as was later the case with Christ. We should not be surprised, however, that Joseph was not murdered but sold. Isaac was not killed either. These men prefigured the truth that was to come, but were not themselves this truth. We can, however, discern in them the twofold mystery of Christ's twofold nature. Their being led to the slaughter foreshadowed the passion according to the flesh of Him who was the God-man, whereas the fact that they did not suffer foretold the impassible nature of His divinity.[153] It was the same with regard to Jacob and Abraham. Although they were tempted, they were victorious, which is what the Scriptures clearly tell us about Christ. Of these four men who were renowned for their virtue and devoutness in the time before the law, two, Abraham and Jacob, had the mystery of the Cross at work in their lives, whereas the other two, Isaac and Joseph, themselves proclaimed the mystery of the Cross beforehand in a marvellous way.

14. But what about Moses, who was the first to receive the law from God and to share it with others? He was himself saved by means of wood and water before the law was given, when he was exposed to the Nile's currents, hidden away in an ark (Exod. 2:3–10). And by means of wood and water he saved the people of Israel, revealing the

Cross by the wood, holy baptism by water (Exod. 14:15–31). Paul, who had looked upon the mysteries, says openly, "They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud" (1 Cor. 10:2). He also bears witness that, even before the events concerning the sea and his staff, Moses willingly endured Christ's Cross, "Esteeming", he says, "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt" (Heb. 11:26). For the Cross is the reproach of Christ from the standpoint of foolish men. As Paul himself says of Christ, "He endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2). Far in advance, Moses proclaimed in the clearest possible way the figure and form of the Cross and the salvation this sign would bring. For he stood his staff upright and stretched out his hands above it and, when he had formed himself into the shape of a cross upon his staff, this sight completely routed Amalek (Exod. 17:8–13).[154] Again, by placing the serpent of brass sideways upon a standard, he publicly raised up the sign of the Cross and commanded the Jews who had been bitten by serpents to look upon it as a means of salvation, and so he healed the serpents' bites (Num. 21:4–9).

15. Time fails me to tell of Joshua and his fellow judges and prophets, or David and his successors who, by the working of the mystery of the Cross within them, dried up rivers (2 Kgs. 19:24, Isa. 37:25), made the sun stand still (Josh. 10:13), razed the cities of the ungodly (Gen. 19:25, 2 Pet. 2:6), became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight, escaped the edge of the sword, quenched the violence of fire, stopped the mouths of lions, put kings to shame (Heb. 11:33–34, Judg. 4:6; 13:24, Dan. 6:23; 3:23–25; 49–50), reduced captains of fifty to ashes (2 Kgs. 1:13), raised the dead (1 Kgs. 17:23, 2 Kgs. 4:36), made the heavens stand still with a word (2 Kgs. 20:10–11), then let them go, preventing the clouds from giving rain, then letting them do so. If Paul says that faith has done all these things (Heb. 11:32–40), it is because faith is power unto salvation, and all things are possible for him who believes. Clearly the Cross has this same power for believers. "For the preaching of the Cross", to quote Paul again, "is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are being saved[155] it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

16. If we move on from all those who lived before or under the law, the Lord Himself, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things" (Heb. 2:10), said before the Cross, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:38). Notice that even before the Cross was fixed in the ground, it was the Cross which brought salvation. When the Lord spoke openly beforehand of His

passion and death on the Cross, Peter could not bear to hear. Knowing the Lord's power, he entreated Him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Matt. 16:22). The Lord reprimanded him because in this respect his thinking was human not divine. And "when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his soul shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his soul for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:34–35, *cf.* Luke 9:23, Matt. 16:24–25).

17. He also invited the people together with his disciples, and then announced and proclaimed these great and marvellous thoughts which are obviously from God not from men. This was to make it clear that such things were not demanded solely of his chosen disciples, but of everyone who believes in Him. To follow Christ means to live according to His Gospel and to give proof of every virtue and of true piety. The fact that anyone wishing to follow Him must deny himself and take up his cross means he must not spare himself when the moment comes, but be ready to die a dishonourable death for the sake of virtue and the truth of holy doctrines. Though it be a great and marvellous thing for someone to deny himself and surrender himself to extreme dishonour and death, it is not contrary to reason. When earthly kings go to war, they do not let people follow them who are not prepared to die for them. So it is not surprising that the King of heaven, who came to live on earth according to His promise, should seek such people as His followers in His attack upon the common enemy of the human race. Earthly kings can neither revive those killed in war, nor reward them fittingly for bearing the brunt of the battle. What could someone who is no longer alive receive from them? But in the Lord there is hope even for those who have died, if their death was in defence of what is sacred. To His followers who were daring in battle the Lord gives the reward of eternal life.

18. Whereas earthly kings require those who follow them to be prepared to die for them, the Lord gave Himself over to death for our sake and commands us to be ready to die not for His sake, but for ours. To make it clear that it is for our own sake, he adds, "For whosoever will save his soul shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his soul for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35).[156] What does this mean, that anyone who wants to save it shall lose it, and anyone who loses it shall save it? Man is twofold, consisting of

our outward man, the body, and our inward man, the soul. When our outward man gives himself over to death, he loses his soul, which is separated from him. But when someone loses his soul for Christ and the Gospel, he truly saves and gains it, procuring for it eternal life in heaven; and this is how he will receive it in the resurrection, and by it he will become heavenly and eternal, even, I say, in his body. Anyone, by contrast, who clings to life is not prepared to lose his soul in this way, because he loves this fleeting age and everything to do with it. He will inflict loss on his soul, depriving it of true life, and he will lose it, surrendering it along with himself, alas, to eternal punishment. The all-merciful Lord mourned for such people and indicated how great a disaster was theirs by saying, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36–37).[157] For neither his glory nor any of the other deceptive honours and delights of this present age, chosen by him in preference to a death which brings salvation, will go down with him. How could any of these things be given in exchange for a human soul, which is worth more than the whole world?

19. Even if a man could gain the whole world, brethren, it would be of no benefit to him because he would have lost his own soul. In reality, each person can only acquire an infinitely small share of this world. What a disaster, then, if someone loses his soul in his efforts to acquire this tiny share, rather than choosing to take up the sign and word of the Cross and to follow the giver of life. Now both the sign which we reverence and the word concerning it are, in fact, the Cross.

20. As the word and the mystery came before the sign itself, we shall expound them to your charity first. Or rather, Paul expounded them before us; Paul who boasts in the Cross, determined not to know anything, save the Lord Jesus, and Him crucified (*cf.* 1 Cor. 2:2). What does he say? The Cross means crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires (*cf.* Gal. 5:24). Do you think he is referring only to the passions of sensual pleasure and gluttony? In that case he would not have written to the Corinthians, "Since there is among you strife and divisions are ye not carnal and walk as men?" (1 Cor. 3:3). Consequently, anyone who loves glory or money, or simply wants to impose his own will in his eagerness to prevail, is carnal and walks as men, since such things are the source of divisions. As James, the Lord's brother, says, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust and have

not: ye fight and war" (Jas. 4:1–2). Crucifying the flesh with its passions and longings means stopping all activity which is displeasing to God. Although our body may pull us down and exert pressure on us, we must still lift it up urgently to the height of the Cross. What am I trying to say? When the Lord was on earth He lived a life of poverty, and not just lived but preached poverty, saying, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

21. May none of you, brethren, be annoyed when you hear us announcing, in unadulterated form, the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, nor be vexed because you think these precepts are unattainable.[158] Bear in mind, firstly, that the kingdom of heaven is subject to violence, and the violent take it by force (Matt 11:12). Listen to Peter, the leader of Christ's apostles, who says, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). Then you should consider the fact that when someone really learns how much he owes the Master, and is unable to repay in full, he modestly offers as much as he can and freely chooses to. As for the remaining debt, he humbles himself before the Lord and, attracting His compassion through this humility, he makes up for the shortfall. If someone observes his thought reaching out towards riches and wealth, he must realize that[159] this fleshly thought separates him from Christ crucified within him.

22. How can you begin to take this thought up to the height of the Cross? Having put your hope in Christ who provides for all creation and nurtures it, keep away from all unjust gains, and do not be too attached even to honest income. Put it to good use and let the poor share in it as much as possible. It is the same with the commandment to deny the body and take up our cross. Although godly people who live according to His will have bodies, they are not too attached to them, but make use of their assistance when necessary. Should they be called upon to do so, they are ready to part with them. If you act in this way in respect of the body's attributes and needs, even if you can do nothing more, this is good and pleasing to God. Do you see the thought of fornication forcefully stirred up within? Be aware that you have not yet crucified yourself. How can this be done? Flee from looking inquisitively at women, from unseemly familiarity with them and inappropriate conversation. Reduce the fuel which feeds this passion by giving up excessive drinking, drunkenness, eating your fill and sleeping too much. To the renunciation of these evils add

humblemindedness,[160] and call upon God with a contrite heart for help against this passion. Then you too will say, "I have seen the wicked in great power and filled up like the cedars of Lebanon. I passed him by through self-control and, lo, he was not: I sought him in humble prayer, but his place could not be found in me" (*cf.* Ps. 36:35–36 LXX).

23. Are you troubled by the thought of love of glory? When you are in meetings or councils, bring to mind the Lord's advice on this subject in the Gospels. Do not try to appear superior to others when you speak. Practise any virtues you have in secret, looking only to God and seen only by Him, "and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:6). If, after cutting off the causes of every one of the passions, the thought of them still inwardly troubles you, do not be afraid. It will procure you crowns, since it annoys you but does not win you over, and is not active. It is a dead movement, conquered by your godly struggle.

24. Such is the word of the Cross (*cf.* 1 Cor. 1:18). It was and is, therefore, a great and truly divine mystery, not only in the time of the prophets before it was accomplished, but also now after it has been fulfilled. Why is this so? On the face of it, anyone who lowers and humbles himself in all respects seems to be bringing dishonour on himself, anyone who flees carnal pleasures appears to be causing himself toil and grief, and anyone who gives away his possessions looks as though he is making himself poor. But by the power of God this poverty, grief and dishonour give birth to inexhaustible riches, inexpressible delight and eternal glory, both in this world[161] and in the world to come. Paul ranks those who do not believe this, and prove their faith by their actions, with the lost, or with the Greeks. "We preach", he says, "Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block", because they do not believe in the saving passion, "and unto the Greeks foolishness", as they value transitory things above all else because of their complete disbelief in God's promises, "but unto them that are called, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23).[162]

25. This is the wisdom and power of God: to be victorious through weakness, exalted through humility, rich through poverty. Not only the word and the mystery of the Cross are divine and to be reverenced, but so also is its sign. For it is a holy, saving and venerable seal, able to hallow and perfect all the good, marvellous and indescribable things

which God has done for the human race. It can take away the curse and condemnation, destroy corruption and death, bestow eternal life and blessing. It is the wood of salvation, the regal sceptre, the divine trophy of victory over visible and invisible enemies, even though the heretics' followers are insanely displeased. They have not attained to the apostle's prayer that "they might be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth" (Eph. 3:18). They have not understood that the Lord's Cross discloses the entire dispensation of His coming in the flesh, and contains within it the whole mystery of this dispensation. Extending in all directions, it embraces everything above, below, around and between. The heretics abhor the sign of the King of Glory (Ps. 24:7–10),[163] putting forward an excuse, in accordance with which, if they were reasonable, they ought to reverence the Cross along with us. The Lord Himself, when He was going to ascend the Cross, openly referred to it as His lifting up and His glory (John 3:14–15). And He announced that when He came again and manifested Himself, this sign of the Son of man would come with power and great glory (Matt. 24:30).

26. The heretics say that because Christ died nailed to the Cross, they cannot bear to see the form of the wood on which He was put to death. But where was the handwriting nailed which was drawn up against us because of our disobedience, when our forefather stretched out his hand to the tree? How was it taken out of the way and obliterated, enabling us to return to God's blessing? Where did Christ despoil and drive completely away the principalities and powers of the evil spirits, which had taken a hold on our nature since the time of the tree of disobedience? Where did He triumph over them and put them to shame, so that we could be set free? Where was the middle wall of partition broken down and our enmity towards God abolished and put to death? By what means were we reconciled with God and how did we hear the Good News of peace with Him? Surely it was on the Cross and by means of the Cross. Let those who doubt listen to what the apostle writes to the Ephesians, "For Christ is our peace, who hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:14–16). To the Colossians he writes, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:13–15).

27. Surely we should honour and use this divine trophy of the freedom of the whole human race. Its appearance alone puts the serpent, the originator of evil, to flight, triumphs over him and disgraces him, proclaiming him defeated and crushed. It glorifies and magnifies Christ, and displays His victory to the world. If it were really necessary to disregard the Cross because Christ suffered death on it, then His death too would be neither honourable nor salutary. So how can we have been baptized into His death, as the apostle tells us (Rom. 6:3)? And how can we share in His resurrection, if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death (Rom. 6:5)? On the other hand, if someone were to reverence the sign of the Cross without the Lord's name written upon it, he could justly be accused of doing something incorrect. Since "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth" (Phil. 2:10), and the Cross bears this venerable name. How very foolish not to bow the knee at Christ's Cross!

28. Inclining our hearts as well as bending our knees, come, "let us worship", with David the psalmist and prophet, "at the place where His feet stood" (Ps. 132:7 Lxx),[164] where His all-embracing hands were outspread and His life-giving body was stretched out for our sake. As we reverence and greet the Cross with faith, let us draw and keep the abundant sanctification flowing from it. Then, at the sublimely glorious future advent of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, as we see Him come in glory, we shall rejoice and skip for joy unceasingly, having attained to a place on His right hand and heard the promised joyful words and blessing, to the glory of the Son of God crucified in the flesh for us.

29. For to Him belongs all glory, together with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY TWELVE

ON THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF HOLY LENT[165]

BEING THAT OF THE HEALING OF THE BOY WITH A DEMON INCLUDING A WORD ON ATTENTION TO INNER THOUGHTS

I HAVE SPOKEN OFTEN TO YOUR CHARITY about fasting and prayer, especially during these holy days. But so far I have imparted nothing to your devout ears and souls about the gifts with which they honour those who love them, and the many benefits they bring about for those who make use of them. These matters are confirmed above all by the Lord's words in today's Gospel reading. So what are these gifts? They are great, probably the greatest of all. Among other things, they can bestow authority against evil spirits, to cast them out and drive them away, and to free those possessed from their cruelty. When the disciples, referring to the deaf and dumb spirit, told the Lord that they could not cast him out, the Lord told them, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17:21).

2. Perhaps that was why, when the Lord descended after His prayer on the mountain with its accompanying manifestation of divine light (Matt. 17:1–9, Mark 9:2–9, Luke 9:28–37, 2 Pet. 1:16–18), He immediately came to the place where the man possessed by that demon was (Mark 9:14–17). He had taken His chosen disciples, it says, "and went up into a mountain to pray, and he did shine as the sun. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him" (*cf.* Matt. 17:2–3 and Luke 9:28–30). These two men practised prayer and fasting more than anyone else, and their appearance while the Lord was praying shows the harmony and concord between fasting and prayer. In their talking with the Lord, it was as if fasting were talking to prayer. As we learn

from Moses, the Lord told Cain that the voice of the blood of smitten Abel cried unto Him (Gen. 4:8–10). In the same way, all the parts and members of our body suffering hardship because of fasting cry unto the Lord and, joining their voice to the prayer of the faster, pray together with him. They make his prayer highly acceptable, and justify him for having voluntarily undergone the toil of fasting.[166] So then, after having prayed and shone with the divine light, the Lord came down from the mountain and approached the crowd and His disciples, to whom the man with the demon had been brought. On the mountain He showed that the reward for fasting was not merely great but all-surpassing – for He revealed that their prize was divine radiance. Now that He had descended, He would prove that they also win power over demons.

3. Since it is customary on this Sunday of the fast to read about this miracle in church, let us start from the beginning and go through the whole of the Gospel passage which recounts it (Mark 9:17–31). When Jesus came to the disciples and those with them, and asked what they were discussing, one of the multitude answered and said, "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away" (Mark 9:17–18).

4. Why was he foaming at the mouth, gnashing his teeth and withering away? Of all the parts of the possessed man's body, his brain suffers first and foremost, since the demon uses the spirit of the soul within the brain as a vehicle, and from there, as from a citadel, exercises power over the whole body. When the brain is afflicted, it emits a frothy, phlegm-like discharge to the nerves and muscles of the body, blocking up the outlets of the soul's spirit. As a result, shock, convulsions and involuntary movements affect all the parts of the body capable of independent movement, especially the jaws, as they are nearest to the part originally afflicted. A lot of moisture is brought down into the mouth due to the size of its pores and its proximity to the brain. Since, because of the unruly movements of the body's organs, it is impossible to breathe out in one long breath, and the breath is mixed up with the accumulation of moisture, those afflicted foam at the mouth. So the demon was foaming at the mouth and gnashing his teeth, clashing them together horribly and grinding them in a frenzy. The boy was withering away because of the demon's extreme violence. The heat of the sun's rays causes mist to form, but if this heat intensifies, it makes the mist disappear and disperses it completely. Similarly, the demon's

violence causes moisture to come from the internal organs, but if this violence intensifies, the body's natural juices soon evaporate and the possessed person withers away.[167]

5. The father of the man with the demon went on to tell the Lord that he had asked His disciples to cast him out, but they could not (Mark 9:18). Then the Lord, addressing not just the man but everyone, said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" (Mark 9:19). I think it likely that the Jews who were present at the time had used the disciples' inability to cast out the demon as an excuse for a few blasphemous comments. They did not cease speaking blasphemy when miracles were performed, so what would they stop short of saying if they had an excuse? The Lord was aware of their murmuring and reproaches, and, from afar, proved them wrong and put them to shame, not just with hard-hitting words, but with both deeds and words full of love for mankind. He ordered that the possessed man be brought to Him, and they brought him. When the demon saw the Lord, he convulsed the man, who fell down and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. For He gave the demon leave to demonstrate his wickedness openly (Mark 9:19–20).

6. Then the Lord asked the boy's father, "How long is it ago since this came unto him?" (Mark 9:21). The Lord asked this question out of charity, to lead the man towards believing and supplication with faith, since he was so far from believing that he did not even plead for his son to be saved. He had not entreated the disciples at all either. "I spake", it says, "to them that they should cast him out" (Mark 9:18). He had not fallen down at their feet or pleaded with them or besought them. Up until then he did not seem to have besought the Lord either. So the Lord left the boy lying wretchedly in front of Him, and addressed the father, asking how long he had been afflicted, and eliciting a request from him. He replied that he had him from childhood and that he had often cast him into fire and water to destroy him. Then he added, "But if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us" (Mark 9:21–22).

7. You see how lacking in faith the man was. Anyone who says, "If thou canst", makes it obvious that he does not believe you can. The Lord replied, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). He did not say this because He was unaware of the man's disbelief, but to lead him step by step towards faith and to show that his lack of faith was the cause of the disciples' failure to cast

out the demon. Observe carefully the evangelist's words. He does not say that the Lord said to the boy's father "If thou canst believe" just as He almost always demanded faith of those who asked for healing, but as the Master and Guardian of souls, He also strove to heal them through faith. When the boy's father heard that healing would follow upon his own faith, he said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). See what excellent moral progress he had made! He not only believed that the boy could be healed, but also that the Lord could overcome his own lack of faith, if He was willing. At these words, the people came running together and the Lord rebuked the unclean spirit, saying, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him" (Mark 9:25).

8. This demon seems to have been extraordinarily savage and defiant, as proved by the severity of the Lord's rebuke and His command that he should not return. Apparently, if it had not been for this order, he might have gone back again after having been cast out. He had a strong hold over the man and was difficult to detach. He was deaf and dumb as the man's nature was inadequate to minister to his excessive madness, and had been afflicted with almost total deprivation of the senses. "And the spirit cried", it says, "and rent him sore, and came out of him: and the man was as one dead; insomuch that many said, he is dead" (Mark 9:26). The demon's cry does not contradict the fact that he was dumb. Speech means sounds which convey a meaning, whereas a cry is an unintelligible sound. The demon was allowed to convulse the man so severely as to make him like a corpse, so that all his wickedness could be openly seen. Nevertheless the Lord took the man by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose, showing in this way what great energy was His. Taking him by the hand was a manifestation of created energy like our own. Raising him up completely unharmed, however, demonstrated uncreated, divine, life-creating energy.[168]

9. When the disciples asked Him privately, "Why could not we cast him out", He told them that this particular demon "can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:28–29). Some people say this must be the afflicted person's prayer and fasting, but it is not so. Anyone in whom an evil spirit is at work, especially one like this, is his tool and completely in his power. So how can he pray and fast for his own good?

10. It seems that this terrible demon was the demon of licentiousness. Sometimes it casts its victims into the fire – that is, into strange loves devoid of affection – and sometimes it plunges them into the water by means of gluttony and excessive indulgence in drinking and parties. The demon in such people is also deaf and dumb, because anyone who has let himself be persuaded by the suggestions of such a demon can hardly bear to hear or speak of sacred subjects. When someone who does not have this evil spirit dwelling within him, but has been carried along by his suggestions, stands up ready to repent – for he still has his freedom of action[169] – he has need of prayer and fasting. Through fasting he curbs his body and checks its stirrings, while through prayer he puts out of action and lays to rest the soul's former preferences and thoughts which arouse this passion, and he overcomes it, having repelled the satanic assault and violence by fasting and prayer. If, however, he not only acts on the demon's suggestions, but has him dwelling within him, he no longer suffers like other men. Nor can he himself do anything towards being healed. If those who are free, especially those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, do on his behalf what he would himself if his mind were at liberty, this can make a great contribution towards casting out the demon (*cf.* Jas. 5:16, Acts 12:5).

11. Driving away demons, however, is not required of us, and even if we were able to drive them away it would be no advantage to us if we lived carelessly. "Many", it says, "will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:22–23). It is much more profitable to us to strive to banish the passions of fornication, anger, hatred and pride than to cast out demons. Being delivered from bodily sins is not enough, we must also cleanse the inner energy which dwells in our soul.[170] For out of our hearts "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness" (Mark 7:21) and so on – these are what motivate people. Also, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). Even when your body does nothing, sin can be active in your mind. When your soul inwardly repulses the evil one's attack by means of prayer, attention,[171] remembrance of death,[172] godly sorrow and mourning[173] the body, too, takes its share of holiness, having acquired freedom from evil actions. This is what the Lord meant by saying that someone who cleans the outside of a cup has not cleansed

it inside, but clean the inside, and the whole cup will be clean (Matt. 23:25–26). "Strive as hard as you can to ensure that your inner labour is according to God's will, and you will conquer the outward passions."[174] If the root is holy, so are the branches (John 15:5). If the yeast is holy, so is the dough (Gal. 5:9). "Walk in the Spirit", says Paul, "and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

12. Christ did not abolish the Jewish circumcision but fulfilled it. He Himself says, "I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). How did He do this? It was a seal, a sign and a symbolic way of teaching about cutting off evil thoughts in the heart, something the Jews were not very zealous about. They were reproached by the prophets for being uncircumcised in their hearts (*cf.* Jer. 9:26, Rom. 2:25), they were hated by Him who could look into hearts, and in the end they became outcasts. Man looks at the outward person, but God regards the heart, and if it is full of foul or evil thoughts, that man deserved to have God turn away from him. That is why the apostle exhorts us to pray without wrath and doubting (1 Tim. 2:8).

13. To teach us to strive for the spiritual circumcision of our hearts, the Lord pronounces the pure in heart and the poor in spirit blessed. He stresses that the reward for this purity of heart is seeing God, and He promises the kingdom of heaven to the poor (Matt. 5:8, 3). By the poor he means those who live frugally and in need. But it is not only such people whom He calls blessed, but also those who are like them in spirit, those who, because of their inner humility of heart and their good purpose, have arranged their outward life accordingly. He forbids not just murder but anger, and commands us to forgive from our hearts those who sin against us. Nor will He accept the gift we offer unless we are first reconciled with one another and let go of anger (Matt. 5:21–24).

14. His teaching is the same in respect of the passion of fornication, since He declares that an idle look and the resultant desire in the heart is adultery (Matt. 5:27–28). Looking at the subject as a whole He says, "If the light that is in thee", namely, the mind and the reason,[175] "be darkness", full of the unenlightened assaults of the rulers of darkness, "how much greater is that darkness", of the body and the senses, which of themselves do not possess the noetic radiance[176] that gives birth to both truth and dispassion? If the light within you is clear, unobscured by fleshly ways of thinking, your soul will be completely radiant, as though a lamp were illuminating you with its

light (*cf.* Matt. 6:22–23, Luke 11:34). Such is the spiritual circumcision of the heart through which the Lord fulfilled the circumcision of the flesh according to the law, given to the Jews as a sign and a guide towards it (Rom. 2:28–29). As they made no effort to acquire this spiritual circumcision, their own circumcision, as Paul says, "is made uncircumcision" (Rom. 2:25), and they have been estranged from God who does not regard the person (Gal. 2:6, *cf.* Matt. 22:16, Mark 12:14, Luke 20:21), that is, the outward signs of righteousness in the flesh, but looks into the heart, at the invisible movements of our thoughts within us.

15. Please may we too, brethren, be on our guard, and let us cleanse our heart from all defilement, lest we be drawn in the wrong direction with the condemned. If the law spoken by Moses "was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect our own salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost" (Heb. 2:2–4). Let us fear Him who examines hearts and minds. Let us appease the Lord of vengeance. Let us make ourselves the dwelling of peace, sanctification, and contrite prayer, without which no one will see God (Heb. 12:14). Let us long with the full assurance of faith for that vision promised to the pure in heart, and may we do everything to attain it, for it is accompanied by eternal life, unfading goodness, inexhaustible riches, unchanging and unending delight, glory and kingdom.

16. May we all attain to these things in Christ, the King of the ages, to whom alone belong all glory, honour and worship, with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, unto endless ages. Amen.

HOMILY THIRTEEN

On the Fifth Sunday of the Fast[177]

ON THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS INCLUDING A WORD ON ALMSGIVING

THERE ARE CERTAIN PARTS OF THE SEA which teem with huge beasts like sea monsters. Those who sail there hang bells from their ships, so that the creatures panic and flee at the sound. Many wild things far more horrible breed in the sea of our life: the evil passions and the even more evil demons who supervise them. God's Church sails upon this sea like a ship, and instead of bells it has spiritual teachers[178] to ward off the invisible beasts by the holy sound of their teaching. Prefiguring this, Aaron's robe had sweet-sounding bells fastened to its edge, and it was decreed that when Aaron ministered their sound should be heard (Exod. 27:21–35).

2. Turning the literal into the spiritual to good effect, let our words ring out to you now spiritually, especially in this time of fasting when visible and invisible beasts make terrible attacks. The visible ones are gluttony, drunkenness and the like. The ones that lie invisibly in wait are vainglory, pride, self-conceit and hypocrisy. The same sound puts such beasts to flight and safeguards those who practice fasting.

3. Fasting and self-indulgence are opposites, like life and death. Fasting is a commandment of life as old as human nature,[179] for it was originally given by God to Adam in paradise (Gen. 2:16–17), as a guardian of the life and grace engendered in him by God Himself. Self-indulgence, on the other hand, is a counsel of death for both soul and body, craftily given by the devil to Adam in paradise by means of Eve (Gen. 3:1–6), for banishment from life and estrangement from

God-given divine grace. God did not make death, nor does He delight in the destruction of the living. Does anyone want to find life and grace in God and from God? Let him flee lethal self-indulgence and run towards fasting and prayer which make divine, that he may return to paradise rejoicing.

4. When Moses fasted forty days on the mountain he soared to the height of divine vision and received tablets of godliness (Exod. 34:28). Meanwhile the Hebrew people down below made themselves drunk, sank into ungodliness and cast an idol in the form of a calf, like the Egyptian god Apidos (Exod. 32:1–8). If Moses had not stood before God, having made atonement earlier through the merciless killing of many of his people, God would not have spared them at all (Exod. 32:9–34:27). If we too need God's mercy, let us not become drunk on wine or weigh ourselves down by eating our fill, for debauchery and ungodliness accompany such behaviour (*cf.* Eph. 5:18). Elijah also saw God, but he too was purified by fasting (1 Kgs. 19:8–12). Daniel attained to divine vision and saw one of the archangels, who granted him knowledge of things to come, but he had stayed without food for twenty whole days beforehand (Dan. 10:1–21). Another prophet was killed by a lion because he ate against God's will (1 Kgs. 13:11–26). You all know about Esau, Isaac's son, who, through gluttony, lost his father's blessing as well as his other rights as the first born son (Gen. 25:25–34; 26:34–35, Heb. 12:16). We should be afraid lest, by being intent on our stomachs, we fall away from the blessings and inheritance promised to us by our Father on high. You are also not ignorant of the three youths devoted to fasting (Dan. 1:11–15), who, without turning their feet or bodies, trampled on the furnace in Babylon which had been heated seven times more on their account (Dan. 3:16–27).

5. If we practise true fasting we shall trample here and now on the fire in our flesh and quench it, and in the time to come we shall pass unharmed through the furnace when each one's work will be tried by fire (*cf.* 1 Cor. 3:11–15). As for the Lord of the prophets, what can we say about Him? When He took flesh and became man for our sake, He taught us the way to defeat the devil by the fact that, while fasting, He was completely victorious over him when he stirred up every kind of temptation against Him. He also told His disciples, with reference to the deaf and dumb spirit, that "This demon comes forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29, *cf.* Matt. 17:21).

6. Let us show you, brethren, what sort of fasting is true and pleasing to God. You should be aware that we do not commend physical fasting

for its own sake, but because it brings about other, greater benefits for the soul.[180] As the divine Paul says, "Bodily exercise profiteth a little" (1 Tim. 4:8). Speaking from experience, our God-bearing Fathers do not approve of fasting for days on end. They consider it more acceptable to eat once a day without satisfying your appetite. This is what they refer to as moderate and reasonable fasting, as the Scripture says as well: not to be led astray by a full stomach and the pleasure of eating, but to leave your food while still feeling hungry.[181] The type and quantity of food should be appropriate to the strength and disposition of the eater's body, to preserve his health as far as possible.[182] If a weak person eats foods appropriate to his weakness in moderation, without supplementing the necessities with more satisfying extras, and if he seeks nourishment not enjoyment, something to drink not drunkenness, and moderate consumption not excess, self-indulgence and abuse, he will not be deprived of holiness.

7. This is the starting point of true fasting which is pleasing to God. But Christians laid it down as a rule and held it in honour on account of its outcome, the purification of the soul.[183] What good does it do to abstain from bodily food and to be defeated by fleshly ways of thinking and passions? What advantage is it to refrain from wine and be tormented by thirst, but to be drunk without wine - as it says in the Scriptures, "Woe unto them that are drunken, but not with wine" (*cf.* Isa. 51:21, and also 28:1 Lxx; 29:9) - and for our souls to be stirred up with anger and ill-will? How do we benefit by avoiding luxurious spreads, if our soul remains unhumbled, or by depriving our flesh of its fatness, without humbling our soul in fasting as David did? What good does it do us if we are free of the vapour given off by excessive food,[184] but our mind is rendered useless by vain cares and thoughts and our prayers to God also become of no avail?

8. Fasting is beneficial when it is undertaken for quelling desire, humbling the soul, transforming hatred, extinguishing anger, erasing rememberance of wrongs, and for the purity of the understanding and the practice of prayer. If you are well off, let your surplus food be a consolation for the needy.[185] When you fast like this you not only suffer with Christ and are dead with Him, but you are risen with Him and reign with Him for ever and ever. If through such a fast you have been planted together in the likeness of His death, you shall also share in His resurrection and inherit life in Him (*cf.* Rom. 6:5).[186] Should the faster be tempted, he overcomes his tempter. Should he

not be, he preserves the peace of his soul and body by bruising his body, according to Paul, and bringing it into subjection, for fear of being rejected (*cf.* 1 Cor. 9:27). If Paul was afraid of this, how much more should we be? The faster brings his body into subjection and his soul is tried and tested. On the other hand, when someone fattens up his flesh, which is soon to perish, not eating to live, but rather living to eat, like animals we are preparing to slaughter, and supplements necessary foods with extras in order to make it fat and prosperous, either to rouse its evil desires or simply for sensual, bodily pleasure, obviously all he is doing is preparing more abundant food for the worms. David the prophet puts it well when he sings, "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down into the pit?" (Ps. 30:9).

9. When you are fasting and limiting your food, do not store up the surplus for the following day. The Lord made us rich through becoming poor, and you, by your voluntary hunger,[187] should nourish those who are starving against their will.[188] Then your fasting will be like a dove bearing an olive sprig which brings your soul the good tidings of deliverance from the flood (*cf.* Gen. 8:11). "If thou take away from the midst of thee", says the great Isaiah, "the yoke, the putting forth of the finger and speaking vanity: and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry; and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity and thy darkness be as the noonday" (Isa. 58:9–10). If you do not wish to give what is yours, at least keep away from what belongs to others and do not take possession of what is not yours, by unjustly seizing and keeping things, sometimes even from people poorer than yourselves. Otherwise you may rightly hear from the same prophet, "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? saith the Lord, even if thou bend thy neck as a ring, thy fast will not be acceptable, but loose the bands of wickedness, dissolve the ties of oppressive contracts, and tear up every unjust bond. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall compass thee" (*cf.* Isa. 58:5–8 LXX).

10. If you do not give even what you have in excess of your needs to the poor, at least do not acquire extra things at their expense. When Christ, the Master of all, dispatches those on His left into the fire and curses them, He does not condemn them for seizing what belongs to others, but for not sharing with those in need (Matt. 25:41–45). Extortioners and unjust men will not be resurrected to appear and be judged, but only for an immediate greater judgment and condemnation. Even here such

people appear never to have stood before God with their whole souls. "They eat up my people", it says, "as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord" (Ps. 14:4). That rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully (Luke 12:16–21), and that other one who was clothed in purple and fine linen (Luke 16:19–31), were justly condemned, not for wronging anyone, but for not sharing what was theirs. Treasures are common to all, as they come from the common storehouses of God's creation. Anyone who appropriates what is common as his own is greedy, though not perhaps to the same extent as someone who openly takes possession of other people's belongings. The first, as an evil servant, will, alas, undergo the terrible punishment of being cut off. The second will be submitted to things even more dreadful and terrifying. Neither will ever be able to escape these penalties, unless they receive the poor with hospitality, the one making good use of the things entrusted to him by God, the other distributing what he has accumulated by evil means.

11. The great Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, your ancestors in fact, says, "As touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9).

12. The Lord said to certain people, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). We should be afraid lest we hear these words, not addressed to us now, but, perish the thought, pronounced on that terrible day, when kinship will be judged rather by similarity of deeds. On that day all those who have loved poverty in Christ, or at very least have loved the poor, all who have despised glory, eagerly desired self-control, not just listened to but put into action the divine decrees in the Gospels, will, according to the prayer of the Father of us all by grace, be one in a way surpassing nature. "Grant them", He says, "that they all may be one; as we are one" (*cf.* John 17:21–22). On that day the all-discerning sword of the Spirit will divide a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and will make those whose ways are different strangers to one another (*cf.* Matt. 10:34–37). If this happens here, how much more there, where the All-knowing declares to those who were not like Him in virtue, "I know you not" (*cf.* Matt. 25:1–12; Luke 13:25–27). It seems that they did not possess the heavenly likeness, and were not merciful as our Father is merciful. They did not share their possessions with the needy, as He freely shared His good things with everyone. They were not kind to their neighbours, nor did they make those far away their neighbours through their good works. Because of this dissimi-

larity with Himself, He who is good neither knew them nor brought them into His dwelling. If He acts in this way, those who lived here according to His will and are going to reign with Him there, will presumably say the same to those related to them by blood who do not resemble them in virtue.

13. If someone says he is their brother, he will hear, alas, that no man can ransom his brother. If someone says he was their father, he will hear that God is the only father. And if someone says he is their child, he will hear the words, "If you were my child, you would imitate me, but as it is, you are the child of that father whose desires you accomplish. Away with you and dwell with him for ever. I do not know you. Everything that is God's is mine, but you are not God's. What was mine and yours has now gone. We hated it even in that fading world, and so we became heirs of this kingdom." The holy Fathers referred to "mine" and "yours" as cold words, and wherever they are found, the bond of love is absent and Christ has departed. Even in those days this passion of possessiveness produced love of self,[189] love of money,[190] hatred of one's fellow man,[191] and every kind of evil in those it had overcome, and it still disgraces them now.

14. Brethren, please let us be afraid of these truly dreadful evils. Let us organize our lives as is pleasing to God. Let us forgive that we may be forgiven, let us be merciful to those in need[192] that we may receive mercy many times more abundantly. He who impoverished Himself to the uttermost for our sakes, Himself receives our alms, and in His munificence He will multiply the reward. We must either be poor as He was, and so live with Him, or share what we have with those who are poor for His sake, and so be saved through them. Let us acquire merciful hearts and give positive proof of brotherly love and of devotion towards the Father and Master of all. You will never find a more acceptable time to do this than these days of the fast. If you join almsgiving to fasting you will blot out every sin, venerate the saving passion with boldness, join in the rejoicing at Christ's resurrection and gain eternal redemption.

15. May we all attain to this in Christ Himself our God, to whom belong all glory, honour and worship, with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FOURTEEN

On the Annunciation Of Our Exceedingly Pure Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary

WHEN THE PROPHET AND PSALMIST was enumerating the different aspects of creation and observing God's wisdom in them all, he was filled with amazement and cried out while writing, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all" (Ps. 104:24). Now that I am attempting, if I can, to tell you about the manifestation in the flesh of the Word who made all things, what fitting word of praise will I find? If all things that exist inspire wonder, and their coming out of non-being into being is something divine and greatly to be hymned, how much more amazing, divine and demanding of our praises is it for a being to become god, and not just god, but the God who truly is?[193] Especially as it was our nature which was neither able nor willing to preserve the image in which it was made, and had therefore been rightly banished to the lower parts of the earth. That our nature should become like God, and that through it we should receive the gift of returning to what is better, is a mystery so great and divine, so ineffable and beyond understanding, that it remained absolutely unrecognized by holy angels and men, and even by the prophets, although they had spiritual vision, and was hidden throughout the ages. But why am I speaking about the time before it was accomplished? Even now it has happened, how it happened, although not the fact that it has, remains a mystery, believed not known, worshipped not investigated, and only believed and worshipped through the Spirit. "No man can say that

Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3), and the apostle tells us that it is through the Spirit that we worship and pray (Rom. 8:26).

2. The event which we celebrate today clearly proves that this mystery is beyond the understanding not only of men but of angels and even archangels. The archangel brought the Good Tidings to the Virgin that she would conceive (Luke 1:26–38). But when she sought to find out the way it would happen and asked him, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man" (Luke 1:34), the archangel was completely unable to explain how. He took refuge in God, saying, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35). It was as if someone had asked Moses, "How was man formed out of the ground? How were bones, nerves and flesh made out of dust, or the senses out of what is insensate? Or how was another human being created from Adam's rib? How was the bone stretched out, divided up, joined and fastened together? How were the internal organs, the various juices and everything else formed from a bone?" If someone had asked these questions of Moses all he would have said was that it was God who took dust from the ground and formed Adam, and took of Adam's ribs and made Eve. He would have said who the Creator was, but not the way in which these things were done. In the same way, Gabriel said that the Holy Spirit and the power of the Highest would bring about the birth without seed, but he did not say how. He went on to mention that Elizabeth, who was barren, had conceived in her old age, and all he could say was that with God nothing was impossible (Luke 1:35–37). So how could he explain how she was to conceive and bear a child in virginity?

3. Nevertheless, the archangel's words to the Virgin did contain something more, a reference to a greater mystery. "The Holy Ghost", he said, "shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35). Why was this? Because the child to be born was not to be called a prophet or simply a man, like Adam, but the Son of the Highest, Saviour, Deliverer of the human race and eternal King. When stones fall away from the peak of a mountain and go right down to the foot, many overhanging crags are left in their place. In the same way, when in paradise we fell away from the divine commandment and the blessed and godly way of life, and were brought down as far as Hades, many evils resulted. Not only did the ground yield visible thorns and thistles in accordance with the curse upon our forefather, but we, to an even greater extent, were sown with the thorns of all

sorts of evil passions and with sin's dreadful thistles. Our race did not receive just that sorrow allotted to our First Mother by the curse which condemned her to bear children in sorrow (Gen. 3:16), but almost all our life became pain and sorrow.

4. However, God who made us looked lovingly down on us in His mercy. He bowed the heavens and came down. Having taken our nature upon Him from the Holy Virgin, He renewed and restored it. Or rather, He led it up to divine and heavenly heights. Wishing to achieve this, to bring to fulfilment on this day His pre-eternal counsel, He sent the archangel Gabriel, as Luke the evangelist tells us, "to Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1:26–27).

5. God sent the archangel to a virgin and made her, who continued a virgin, His mother by means of a salutation alone. If He had been conceived from seed, He would not have been a new man, nor sinless, nor the Saviour of sinners. The flesh's impulse to reproduce is not subject to our minds, which God has appointed to govern us, and is not entirely without sin.[194] That is why David said, "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). So if the conception of God had been from seed, He would not have been a new man, nor the author of new life which will never grow old. If He were from the old stock and inherited its sin, He would not have been able to bear within Himself the fullness of the incorruptible Godhead or to make His flesh an inexhaustible source of sanctification, able to wash away even the defilement of our First Parents by its abundant power, and sufficient to sanctify all who came after them. That is why neither an angel nor a man came to save us, but the Lord Himself, who was conceived and took flesh in the womb of a virgin, while remaining unchanged as God.

6. It was necessary for the Virgin to have a witness to the conception without seed, and a helper in those events which were to be accomplished in accordance with the divine dispensation. What were these? The journey to Bethlehem, where the birth took place (Luke 2:1–7), proclaimed and glorified by the heavenly angels (Luke 2:8–14). The entry into the Temple, where Simeon and Anna bore witness that the infant was the Lord of life and death (Luke 2:22–38). The flight into Egypt to escape Herod, and the return from Egypt in accordance with the holy prophesies (Matt. 2:13–21, Hos. 11:1, *cf.* Exod. 4:19), and all the other events which we cannot now relate. On account of these, Joseph was

taken as her betrothed, and the angel was sent "to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph" (Luke 1:26–27). You should understand the reference to being "of the house and lineage of David" as applying to them both (Luke 2:4; *cf.* 1:27). For both the Virgin and Joseph traced their families back to David.

7. "And the virgin's name", it says, "was Mary" (Luke 1:27), which means "Lady".[195] This shows the Virgin's dignity, how certain was her virginity and set apart was her life, exact in every respect and completely blameless. She properly bore the name of Virgin, and possessed to the full all the attributes of purity. She was a virgin in both body and soul, and kept all the powers of her soul and her bodily senses far above any defilement. This she did authoritatively, steadfastly, decisively and altogether inviolably at all times, as a closed gate preserves the treasures within, and a sealed book keeps hidden from sight what is written inside. The Scriptures say of her, "This is the sealed book" (*cf.* Rev. 5:1–6:1, Dan. 12:4) and "this gate shall be shut, and no man shall enter in by it" (Ezek. 44:2).

8. The Virgin is also duly called "Lady" in another sense, as she has the mastery of all things, having divinely conceived and borne in virginity the Master of all by His nature. Yet she is the Lady not just because she is free from servitude and a partaker of divine power, but because she is the fount and root of the freedom of the human race, especially after the ineffable and joyful birth. A married woman is ruled over rather than being a lady, especially after sorrowful and painful childbirth, in accordance with that curse on Eve: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16). Freeing the human race, the Virgin Mother received through the angel joy and blessing instead of this curse. "And the angel came in to her", it says, "and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28). The archangel was not foretelling the future by saying, "The Lord is with thee", but was declaring what he saw happening invisibly at that time. Perceiving that divine and human gifts of grace were to be found in her, and that she was adorned with all the gifts of the holy Spirit, he truly proclaimed her full of grace.[196] He saw that she had already received to dwell within her the one in whom are all these treasures of grace. He saw in advance the painless pregnancy and the birth without labour,[197] and announced to her that she should rejoice, and affirmed that she alone was rightly blessed and glorified among women. Even if other women

may be extolled, no other can be magnified with the surpassing glory of the Virgin Mother of God.

9. When the Virgin saw the archangel she was afraid lest he be a deceitful messenger beguiling unwary women like Eve, and she did not accept his greeting unquestioningly. As she did not yet clearly perceive the bond with God which the archangel was announcing to her, "she was troubled", it says, "at his saying". She was utterly determined to hold fast to her virginity, "and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be" (Luke 1:29). So the archangel dispelled the godly fear of the Virgin full of grace by telling her, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God" (Luke 1:30). What favour? "That grace which is only possible for Him who can do the impossible, and which has been kept for you alone from before the ages." "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb" (Luke 1:31). "When you hear about conception", he told her, "do not suppose that there will be any deviation from virginity. You must not be anxious or troubled on that account." For these words, "Behold, thou shalt conceive", spoken to her who is a virgin, show that the conception is to accompany virginity.

10. "Behold, thou shalt conceive", he said, "and bring forth a son" (Luke 1:31). Continuing as you are now with your virginity inviolate, you shall conceive a child and bear the Son of the Highest. Isaiah foresaw this many years before and prophesied, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son" (Isa. 7:14), and, "I went unto the prophetess" (Isa. 8:3). In what way did the prophet go to the prophetess? In the same way as the archangel now came to her. What the archangel now saw, the prophet foresaw and foretold. That the Virgin was a prophetess with the gift of prophecy, is proved to all by her hymn to God in the Gospel (Luke 1:46–55).

11. It says that Isaiah went to the prophetess, wholly in the spirit of prophecy, and she conceived. Before the pain of labour arrived, she fled and bore a male child (Isa. 8:3–4). The archangel now told the Virgin, "Thou shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus" – which means "Saviour" – "He shall be great" (Luke 1:31). Again, Isaiah's words were, "wonderful, counsellor, mighty one, governor, prince of peace, father of the age to come" (Isa. 9:6 LXX). In harmony with this, the archangel now said, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest" (Luke 1:32). (Why did he say, "He shall be", and, "shall be called", and not, "He is great and is the Son of the Highest"? Because he was referring to the humanity of Christ). The archangel disclosed

at the same time that He would be known to all and proclaimed by all to be great and the Son of the Highest, so that later Paul could say, "God was manifest in the flesh, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world" (1 Tim. 3:16). The archangel continued, "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32–33). He whose kingdom is eternal and without end is God. But the child to be born also had David as His father, therefore He was also man. He was both God and man, Son of man and Son of God. As man He received the inalienable kingdom from God the Father, as Daniel saw and announced beforehand: "I beheld till the thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of days did sit, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, which shall not be taken by any other king" (Dan. 7:9; 7:13–14 LXX).[198]

12. He was to sit upon the throne of David and reign over the house of Jacob. Jacob was the patriarch of all godfearing people, whereas David was the first to prefigure Christ by reigning in the fear of God and in a way pleasing to Him. Christ brought together patriarchate and kingship into one heavenly and earthly dominion. As soon as the highly favoured Virgin heard those extraordinary divine words addressed to her by the archangel, "The Lord is with thee" (Luke 1:28), and, "Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bring forth a son, the Son of the Highest who shall reign for ever" (*cf.* Luke 1:31–33), she replied, "How shall this be unto me, seeing I know not a man?" (*cf.* Luke 1:34). "Although you bring spiritual tidings far above the passions of the flesh, you speak to me of conception in the womb, being with Christ and childbirth, and you emphasize the mention of conception by adding the word 'Behold'." "How shall this be unto me", she said, "seeing I know not a man?"

13. The Virgin did not say this because she disbelieved, but because she wanted to find out as much as possible about the matter. Therefore the archangel told her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). "You are holy", he says, "and full of grace, O Virgin. However, the Holy Spirit shall again come upon you, preparing and completing the work of God within you by the bestowal of a higher

sanctification. The power of the Highest shall overshadow you, to strengthen you, and by overshadowing you and uniting you with itself, shall form the humanity of the one to be born of you, that He may be holy, the Son of God and the power of the Highest in the shape of a man. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth, who has been barren all her life, is now mysteriously with child in her old age, by the will of God, for with God nothing shall be impossible."

14. How did the highly favoured Virgin, with her unrivalled and holy understanding, respond to these words? She ran to God and reached out to Him in prayer, saying to the archangel, "If, as you tell me, the Holy Spirit shall come upon me, purifying my nature still further and strengthening me to receive the unborn Saviour; if the power of the Highest shall overshadow me, forming Him who is in the form of God as man within me and bringing about a birth without seed; if the holy child which shall be born is to be the Son of God and God and the everlasting King, since with God nothing is impossible", "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). And the angel departed from her, leaving the Maker of all united with a body within her womb. By means of this union, which was the object of his ministry, he had procured salvation for the world. Isaiah clearly revealed all this beforehand by what he was so blessed as to be counted worthy to experience. He did not see the seraphim take the live coal directly off the heavenly, spiritual altar. The seraph took it with tongs, and it was by means of these that he touched the prophet's lips to purify him (Isa. 6:5–7). The tongs were the same as the burning bush which was not consumed by the fire, in that great vision seen by Moses (Exod. 3:2–6).

15. Surely it is obvious to anyone that the Virgin Mother is both the burning bush and the tongs. She conceived the divine fire within her and was not burnt, and an archangel ministered at the conception, and through her the Bearer of the sins of the world was united with the human race, purifying us thoroughly by means of this indescribable bond. The Virgin Mother, and she alone, is the frontier between created and uncreated nature. All who know God will recognize her as the one who contained Him who cannot be contained. All who sing hymns to God will praise her next after Him. She is the cause of the benefits which preceded her, the protectress of those which came after, and through her those good things which are eternal shall be received. She is the theme of the prophets, the first of the apostles,

the support of the martyrs, the dais of the teachers. She is the glory of those on earth, the delight of those in heaven, the adornment of the whole creation. She is the beginning, fount and root of the hope stored up for us in heaven.

16. To which may we all attain by her prayers for us, to the glory of Him who was begotten of the Father before all ages, and, in these last times, became incarnate of her, even Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom belong all glory, honour and worship, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FIFTEEN

DELIVERED ON PALM SUNDAY

"IN AN ACCEPTABLE TIME have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee", said God through Isaiah (Isa. 49:8). It is good today to speak these words of the apostle to your charity: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us work the works of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day" (Rom. 13:12–13). The commemoration of Christ's saving passion is at hand, and the new, great spiritual Passover, which is the reward for dispassion and the prelude of the world to come. Lazarus proclaims it in advance by coming back from the depths of Hades and rising from the dead on the fourth day just by the voice and command of God, who has power over life and death (John 11:1–45).[199] By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, children and simple people sing praises in advance to the Redeemer from death, who brings souls up from Hades and gives souls and bodies eternal life.

2. "What man is he that desireth life and to see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile: depart from evil and do good" (Ps. 34:12–14, *cf.* 1 Pet. 3:10–11). Evil means gluttony, drunkenness and dissolute living. Evil means love of money, being greedy for gain, and injustice. Evil means vainglory, arrogance and pride. Let everyone turn aside from such vices and do those things which are good. What are they? Self-control, fasting, chastity, righteousness, almsgiving, forbearance, love, humility. That by so doing we may worthily partake of the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for our sake, and so receive the earnest of incorruption, and keep it as an assurance of the inheritance promised to us in heaven. Is it hard

to do what is good, and are the virtues more difficult than the vices? That is certainly not how I see it. The drunken, self-indulgent person subjects himself because of this to more sufferings than someone who restrains himself; the licentious person suffers more than someone chaste; someone striving to become rich more than someone who lives in contentment with what he has; the person seeking to surround himself with glory than someone who passes his life in obscurity. Since, however, the virtues seem more difficult to us because of our love of comfort, let us force ourselves. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence", it says, "and the violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12).

3. All of us, eminent and lowly, governors and governed, rich and poor, need diligence and attention to drive these evil passions away from our souls, and introduce the whole range of virtues in their stead. Farmers, shoemakers, builders, tailors, weavers and in general all those who earn their living by their own effort and the work of their hands, provided they throw out of their souls the desire for riches, glory and pleasure, are truly blessed. These are the poor to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs. It was on their account that the Lord said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3). The poor in spirit are those whose spirits, or souls, are free from boasting, love of glory and fondness for pleasure, and therefore either choose to be poor in external things as well or else courageously bear involuntary poverty. Those who are rich and comfortable, and enjoy fleeting glory, and in general all who long to be like them, will yield to more harmful passions and fall into other worse traps of the devil, which are more difficult to deal with. When someone becomes rich, he does not lay aside his desire for riches, but increases it, grasping at more than he did before. In the same way, pleasure lovers, power seekers, the dissolute and the debauched increase their desires rather than renouncing them. Rulers and eminent men increase their power so as to commit greater injustices and sin.[200]

4. That is why it is difficult for a ruler to be saved or for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. "How can ye believe", it says, "which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44). But if any of you are well off, or eminent or rulers, do not be dismayed. You can, if you wish, seek the glory of God and exert force on yourselves to stop the impetus towards becoming worse, to practise great virtues and to drive away great evils, not just from yourselves, but from many other people,

even against their will. Not only can you act honestly and chastely yourselves, but there are many ways in which you can prevent those who want to be unjust and licentious from doing so. Not only can you show yourselves obedient to Christ's Gospel and His teachings, but you can also bring those who are minded to disobey into subjection to Christ's Church and its leaders according to Christ. This you are able to do, not just by means of the power and authority allotted to you by God, but by becoming an example of all that is good to those below you. For subjects become like their rulers.

5. Everyone needs diligence, force and attention, but not to the same extent. Those exalted in honour, wealth and power, and those who concern themselves with words and the acquisition of wisdom by means of them, even if they wish to be saved, are in need of greater force and diligence, since they are less obedient by nature. Exactly this can be clearly seen in the readings from Christ's Gospel yesterday and today. The miracle performed on Lazarus openly proved the one who did it to be God. But whereas the people were convinced and believed, the rulers at that time, that is to say, the scribes and Pharisees, were so far from being persuaded that they raged against Him even more, and resolved in their madness to hand Him over to death, although everything He had said and done plainly declared Him to be the Lord of life and death. No one can say that the fact that the Lord lifted up His eyes at that time and said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me", was an obstacle to their regarding Him as equal to the Father, since He went on to say, "I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 11:41–42). So that they might know He was God and came from the Father, and also that He did not work miracles in opposition to God, but in accordance with God's purpose, He lifted up His eyes to God in front of everybody and spoke to Him in words which make it clear that He who was speaking on earth was equal to the heavenly Father on high. In the beginning when man was to be formed, there was a Counsel beforehand. So now also, in the case of Lazarus, when a man was to be formed anew, there was a Counsel first. When man was to be created the Father said to the Son, "Let us make man" (Gen. 1:26), the Son listened to the Father, and man was brought into being. Now, by contrast, the Father listened to the Son speaking, and Lazarus was brought to life.[201]

6. Notice that the Father and the Son are of equal honour and have the same will. The words are in the form of a prayer for the sake of the crowd standing by, but they are not words of prayer but of lordship and absolute authority. "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). And at once the man who had been dead four days stood before Him alive. Did this come about by the command of the life-giver or His prayer? He cried with a loud voice, again on account of the bystanders, since He could have raised him not only by using His normal voice, but just by His will alone. In the same way, He could have done it from afar and with the stone in place. But instead He came to the grave and spoke to those present, who took away the stone and smelt the stench. Then He cried with a loud voice. He raised him in this manner so that by means of their sight (for they saw Him standing at the grave), their sense of smell (for they were aware of the stench of the man four days dead), their sense of touch (for they used their own hands to take away the stone beforehand from the grave, and afterwards to loose the grave-clothes from his body and the napkin from his face), and their hearing (for the Lord's voice reached the ears of all), they all might understand and believe that it was He who called everything from non-being into being, who upheld all things by the word of His power, and who in the beginning by His word alone made everything that exists out of nothing.

7. The simple people believed Him in every respect, and did not keep their faith quiet, but began to preach His divinity by deeds and words. After the raising of Lazarus on the fourth day, the Lord found an ass, and, when His disciples had made it ready, as the evangelist Matthew tells us (Matt. 21:1–11), He sat upon it and entered Jerusalem, as had been foretold in Zechariah's prophecy: "Do not fear, O daughter of Zion: behold thy king cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zech. 9:9, Matt. 21:5). The prophet shows by these words that this king in the prophecy is the only true king of Zion. "Your king", he says, "does not arouse fear in those who see him. Nor is he an oppressor or an evildoer accompanied by shield-bearers and spearmen, trailing behind him a host of foot-soldiers and cavalry, passing his life in greed for gain, demanding taxes and tributes, and unpleasant and harmful labours and services. By contrast, His banner is humility, poverty and lowliness, and He enters mounted upon an ass, without any human pretensions at all. He is the only righteous

King who righteously saves. He is meek, and meekness is His distinctive work." The Lord said of Himself, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29).

8. So the King who had raised Lazarus from the dead entered Jerusalem sitting upon an ass. Everyone, children, men, old people, immediately spread their garments in the way. They took palm-branches, which are symbols of victory, and went to meet Him as the life-giver and victor over death. They fell at His feet and escorted Him in procession, singing together, not just outside but also inside the precincts of the Temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna in the highest" (Matt. 21:9). "Hosanna" is a song of praise directed to God, which means, "Save us". The additional words "in the highest" show that He is not only praised on earth, nor only by men, but also by the heavenly angels on high.

9. The people not only sang His praises and called Him God, but they subsequently opposed the scribes and Pharisees' evil purpose against God and their murderous allegations. For the latter were mad enough to say of Him, "This man is not of God, and since he doeth many miracles, if we let him thus alone and do not put him to death, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (*cf.* John 9:16, 11:47–48). But what did the people say? "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh" (Mark 11:9–10). By saying, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord", they showed that He was from God the Father and that He came in the name of the Father. As the Lord said of Himself, "I came in the name of my Father (*cf.* John 5:43) and I proceeded forth and came from God" (John 8:42). On the other hand, by saying, "Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh", they showed that this was the kingdom in which, according to prophecy, the Gentiles too, and indeed the Romans, were to believe. For this king was not just Israel's hope, but also the expectation of the Gentiles, according to Jacob's prophecy: "Binding his foal unto the vine", where "foal" refers to the Jewish people who were subject to Him, "and his ass's colt unto the branch of the vine" (Gen. 49:11). The branch of the vine is the Lord's disciples, for the Lord said to them, "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (John 15:5). By this branch, the Lord binds to Himself His "ass's colt", namely the New Israel of the Gentiles, who become sons of Abraham by grace.[202] If, asked the people, this kingdom in which

we have put our faith is the hope of the Gentiles too, why should we fear the Romans?

10. Those who were childlike in innocence but not in intelligence were inspired by the Holy Spirit to offer up to the Lord a faultlessly perfect hymn, and bore witness that, as God, He had brought Lazarus back to life after he had been dead for four days. When the scribes and Pharisees, on the other hand, "saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the Temple and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased and said unto the Lord, Hearest thou what they say?" (Matt. 21:15–16). In fact, it would have been more appropriate for the Lord to put the same question to them, "Can you not see, or hear or understand?" To refute those who were complaining that He tolerated songs of praise that were fitting for God alone, He replied, "Yes, I hear those who, invisibly enlightened by Myself, declare such things about me. But if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. Have you never read the prophecy that, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise'?" (Ps. 8:2, Matt. 21:16). This was another amazing fact, that simple, uneducated children should speak perfectly of the divinity of God made man for our sake, and that their voices should take up the angelic hymn. At the Lord's birth the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth" (Luke 2:14), and now at the time of His entry into Jerusalem the children offered up the same hymn, "Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna in the highest" (Matt. 21:9).

11. Let us all, young and old, rulers and subjects, be childlike in innocence, that God may empower us to make a public show of the trophies, and carry aloft the symbols of victory, not just of victory over the evil passions, but over visible and invisible enemies, and may we find the grace of the word to help in time of need (*cf.* Heb. 4:16). The young colt which the Lord deigned to ride for our sake prefigured, although it was only one, the Gentiles' obedience to Him and we, governors and governed alike, are all Gentiles come from them.

12. In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, nor Greek, nor Jew, but all, according to the holy apostle, are one (Gal. 3:28). In the same way, in Him there is neither ruler nor subject, but by His grace we are all one in faith in Him, and belong to one body, His Church, whose head He is. By the grace of the all-holy Spirit we have all drunk of the one Spirit, and have all received one baptism. We all have one hope and one God, who is above all, and through all, and in us all

(Eph. 4:6). So let us love one another. Let us bear with one another, seeing that we are members one of another. As the Lord Himself said, the sign that we are His disciples is love. When He departed from this world, the fatherly inheritance He left us was love, and the last prayer He gave us when He ascended to His Father was about love for one another (John 13:33–35).

13. Let us strive to attain to this fatherly prayer and let us not lose the inheritance He left us nor the sign He gave us, lest we should also lose our sonship, our blessing and our discipleship. If that happens, we shall fall away from the promised hope and be shut out of the spiritual bridechamber. Before His saving passion, when the Lord entered the earthly Jerusalem, not just the people, but also the true rulers of the Gentiles, the Lord's apostles, spread their garments in His way. In the same manner, let us all, rulers as well as subjects, lay down our natural garments before Him, by making our flesh and its impulses subject to the spirit, that we may be made worthy not only to see and worship Christ's saving passion and holy resurrection, but to enjoy communion with Him. "For if", says the apostle, "we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom. 6:5).

14. To which may we all attain by the grace and love towards mankind of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom belong all glory, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY SIXTEEN

About the Dispensation According to the Flesh Of Our Lord Jesus Christ And the Gifts of Grace Granted To Those Who Truly Believe in Him

ALSO TEACHING THAT GOD WAS ABLE TO REDEEM MAN FROM THE DEVIL'S TYRANNY IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS BUT RIGHTLY PREFERRED THIS DISPENSATION

DELIVERED ON HOLY SATURDAY

THE PRE-ETERNAL, uncircumscribed and almighty Word and omnipotent Son of God could clearly have saved man from mortality and servitude to the devil without Himself becoming man. He upholds all things by the word of His power and everything is subject to His divine authority (*cf.* Heb. 1:3). According to Job, He can do everything and nothing is impossible for Him (*cf.* Job 42:2 LXX). The strength of a created being cannot withstand the power of the Creator, and nothing is more powerful than the Almighty. But the incarnation of the Word of God was the method of deliverance most in keeping with our nature and weakness, and most appropriate for Him who carried it out, for this method had justice on its side, and God does not act without justice. As the psalmist and prophet says, "God is righteous and loveth righteousness" (*cf.* Ps. 11:7), "and there is no unrighteousness in Him" (Ps. 92:15). Man was justly abandoned by God in the beginning as he had first abandoned God. He had voluntarily approached the originator of evil, obeyed him when he treacherously advised the opposite of what

God had commanded, and was justly given over to him. In this way, through the evil one's envy and the good Lord's just consent, death came into the world. Because of the devil's overwhelming evil, death became twofold, for he brought about not just physical but also eternal death.

2. As we had been justly handed over to the devil's service and subjection to death, it was clearly necessary that the human race's return to freedom and life should be accomplished by God in a just way. Not only had man been surrendered to the envious devil by divine righteousness, but the devil had rejected righteousness and become wrongly enamoured of authority, arbitrary power and, above all, tyranny. He took up arms against justice and used his might against mankind. It pleased God that the devil be overcome first by the justice against which he continuously fought, then afterwards by power, through the resurrection and the future Judgment. Justice before power is the best order of events, and that force should come after justice is the work of a truly divine and good Lord, not of a tyrant.

3. Whereas he who was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44) attacked us out of envy and hatred, the author of life acted for our sake out of His overwhelming love for mankind and His goodness. The devil achieved his victory and man's fall unjustly and treacherously, but the Redeemer accomplished the final defeat of the originator of evil and the renewal of His creation with righteousness and wisdom. Earlier God left undone what it was in His power to do, so that He might first do what was fitting. In this way, justice was manifested more clearly, having been favoured by Him whose might is unconquerable. Men had to be taught to demonstrate righteousness in their actions now in the time of this mortal life, so that they might be strengthened to hold it fast when eternity comes.

4. It was also necessary for the conqueror to be conquered by that nature which he had conquered, and for the cheat to be outwitted. To this end it was necessary and indispensable that a man be made who would be sinless (*cf.* Job 14:4 LXX). This was, however, impossible, for as the Scripture says, "No one is without sin, even if his life is one day" (Job 14:5 LXX), and, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean?" (Prov. 20:9), and, "There is none sinless, but one, that is, God" (*cf.* Matt. 19:17, Mark 10:18). God the Word was from God, pre-eternally begotten of Him, and in Him – for we cannot even imagine that God was ever without His Word – being one God with Him. (For the sun's brightness is not a different light from the sun, and the sun's ray is not a different sun.) So the only sinless Son and

Word of the Father became the Son of man, unchanged as God, blameless as man. Who alone, as Isaiah bore witness beforehand, "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22, *cf.* Isa. 53:9). Moreover, He alone had not been shapen in iniquity or conceived in sin, as David declared in the Psalms about himself, or rather about everyone (Ps. 51:5). The impulse of the flesh is involuntary and openly wars against the law of the mind. Even though it is brought into subjection by chaste people, and given reign only for the purpose of having children,[203] it ushers in the original condemnation, being subject to corruption and always bringing forth what will perish.[204] In those who are unaware of the honour which our nature has received from God, and have become like animals, it is a movement full of passion.

5. God was not only born among men but, according to the prophets, born of a holy Virgin far above all defiled thoughts of the flesh. It was the Holy Spirit's coming upon her, not fleshly desire,[205] that caused the Virgin to conceive, and the conception was preceded by good tidings and faith in God's indwelling, not acceptance and experience of passionate longing.[206] In the complete absence of such desire, the pure Virgin said with prayer and spiritual joy to the angel bringing the good tidings, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). Having conceived she gave birth, and it was as if the Victor over the devil, being both man and God, had drawn to Himself the root of the human race but not its sin (*cf.* Heb. 4:15). For He was the only one neither shapen in iniquity nor conceived in sin (*cf.* Ps. 51:5), that is to say, in the fleshly pleasure,[207] passion and unclean thoughts that belong to our nature defiled by transgression. The point of this was that the nature He assumed should be wholly pure and unsullied, so that He Himself would not need to be purified, but would in His wisdom accept everything for our sake. He was rightly called the New Adam, and remained youthful and strong, never growing old. In and through Himself He was to create the Old Adam anew and keep him new for ever, since He is able completely to dispel the process of growing old.[208] Originally God created the first Adam undefiled, and he was new until he voluntarily obeyed the devil. He turned aside after the pleasures of the flesh, underwent the defilement of sin, grew old and fell into what is contrary to nature.[209]

6. The Lord did not just create man anew with His hand in a wonderful way, but held him near Him. He did not merely restore

human nature and raise it up from its fall, but in an indescribable fashion clothed Himself in it and indivisibly united Himself with it. He was born both God and man, born of a woman, that He might restore the human nature created by Him, but born of a virgin, that He might make mankind new. If He had been born from seed, He would not have been a new man, nor the author and giver of new life which never grows old. Nor, if He had been of the old stock, could He have received in Himself the fullness of incorruptible divinity. He could not have made His flesh an inexhaustible source of sanctification, with abundant power to wash away the defilement of our First Parents, and sufficient to sanctify everyone who came after them.[210] That is why the Lord's gracious will was that He Himself, not an angel or a man, should mercifully save us and form us anew, coming as a man completely like us while remaining unchanged as God.[211]

7. So the only man who had no sins to account for, who was in no way worthy of being abandoned by God, was born of the Virgin. Before He knew evil He chose the good, according to the prophecy (*cf.* Isa. 7:16 LXX). He lived a completely sinless life. There was nothing in His life which could with justice make Him liable to be abandoned by God, and neither did He desert God by transgressing, like the first Adam. He fulfilled every divine commandment, every divine law, so it was right that He should be free from servitude to the devil. This was how the devil, who had defeated man in the beginning, was defeated by man. He boasted of having overcome human nature made in God's image, and now he was brought down from his arrogance, and man was formed anew after the actual death of his soul. He died this death as soon as he tasted the forbidden tree, and it was of this death that both Adam and Eve were warned of God before their disobedience, for He said, "In the day that thou eatest of the tree, thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). We were condemned to physical death after the transgression, when God said to Adam, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). Physical death is when the soul leaves the body and is separated from it. The death of the soul is when God leaves the soul and is separated from it, although in another way, the soul remains immortal.[212] Once separated from God it becomes more ugly and useless than a dead body, but unlike such a body it does not disintegrate after death since it is not composite.[213]

8. Even in respect of completely inanimate objects, you can see that it is the simpler ones which are more enduring. When the

human soul is separated from the divine energy for good, it is not only smitten with inaction, but starts working against itself, sinking from bad to worse. Eventually, after the wretched soul has lived apart from the body without repenting, it will be handed over, together with the body, to the endless, unbearable bondage of eternal damnation which God has prepared for the devil and his angels (*cf.* Matt. 25:41). All of them are dead, even if they are still active in evil, which is why they were rightly abandoned by the God of true life. The first to undergo this death was Satan, for God justly deserted him on account of his disobedience (*cf.* Isa. 14:12, Luke 10:18, Rev. 12:9). Then he took us as his partners, pulling us down into disobedience with himself by his evil counsel.[214] Christ, however, redeemed our nature from this state of death, having demonstrated every kind of obedience through His actions in His human life.

9. Christ clearly had to make immortal not only the human nature which existed in Him, but the human race, and to guide it towards participating in that true life which in due course procures eternal life for the body as well, just as the soul's state of death in due course brought about the death of the body too. That this plan for salvation should be made manifest, and that Christ's way of life should be put before us to emulate, was highly necessary and beneficial. At one time God appeared visibly before man and the good angels that they might imitate Him. Later, when we had cast ourselves down and fallen away from this vision, God came down to us from on high in His surpassing love for mankind, without in any way giving up His divinity, and by living among us set Himself before us as the pattern of the way back to life.

10. He was also our teacher, using words to show the path that leads to life, and confirming the words of His teaching with great miracles. In this way human nature was justified, as not being evil in itself, but God was justified as well, as not in any way being the cause and maker of evil. If the Father's co-eternal Word had not been made man, sin would have seemed to be part of human nature, for no man had ever been free from sin. The Creator might have been blamed for not creating good things and not being good Himself, or even for being an unjust judge, as if He had unfairly condemned the man who had made himself liable to condemnation.

11. God took human nature upon Himself to show that it was so far removed from sin and so cleansed that it could be united with His person and remain eternally undivided from Him. By this act He

proclaimed to all that God is both good and just, the Maker of good things who upholds fair judgment. When Satan and the apostate angels with him fell from heaven, those angels who kept their place understood that evil was not in angels by nature. Rather, good was natural for them, and their Creator was the essence of goodness. By the Creator's just judgment Satan had been condemned to eternal darkness, because he had created evil for himself by turning away from good. But when Adam fell by turning aside from good to evil, no one remained who was not inclined to evil, and no one was appointed in his place.

12. So Christ was declared the New Adam. According to Isaiah, He did no sin in deed or thought, and certainly not in word, neither was any deceit in His mouth (*cf.* 1 Pet. 2:22, Isa. 53:9). He does not say "*from* his mouth" but "*in* his mouth", to indicate that His thoughts too were blameless. As He says elsewhere, before He knew evil He chose the good (*cf.* Isa. 7:16 Lxx). In this way God was justified, as we have said, and was manifested as truly good and the Maker of good works, since He became a sinless man, and showed forth in Christ the purity which He had inaugurated in human nature.

13. When this ineffable dispensation was to be manifested and openly displayed, John, called the Forerunner, was sent by God from the desert. He baptized those who came to him and exhorted them to be ready to believe in the one who was to come, who, He said, would baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and would be as much greater than him as the Holy Spirit was more excellent than water (Matt. 3:11). John bore witness that the one who was to come was the Master, the Creator of all things and the Lord of angels and of men. All men were His reasonable farmland, and their winnowing fan (*cf.* Matt. 3:12), meaning the powers that minister to them, was in His hand and under His authority. Not only did the Lord's Forerunner bear witness to what the one to come would be, but he showed too that Isaiah had foretold He would be the Lord, and that he, John, had been sent as a minister to proclaim His advent and to urge believers to receive Him, saying, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (John 1:23, *cf.* Isa. 40:3).

14. The Forerunner bore witness that the Lord existed before He was conceived and born. "He is preferred before me", he said, "for He was before me" (John 1:15), although He was conceived and born after John. If the Lord was sent before John, it was not according to the

flesh but obviously before He took flesh. The Forerunner went on to bear witness that the Lord was the Lamb of God who was taking away the sin of the world (John 1:29), thus proclaiming in advance His sacrifice and slaughter for the forgiveness of our sins (*cf.* 1 John 2:2). He testified that He was the Most High who had come down from heaven and was infinitely powerful, for He had not received the Spirit by measure from the Father (John 3:34). To those who believed in Him he promised eternal life and those who did not believe he threatened with God's inescapable wrath (John 3:36). When John's own disciples asked him about the Lord he replied, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). To demonstrate why not only he himself but absolutely everything as far below the Lord as the earth was lower than the heavens, he said, "He that cometh from above is above all" (John 3:31), that is, is exalted above all and, as the beloved Son, preserves His Father's pre-eminence. The Forerunner went on to say, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:35–36).

15. Christ came for baptism partly out of obedience towards the one who sent John. As He said Himself, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). Other reasons were to make Himself known, to make a beginning of guiding us towards salvation, and to confirm to His followers, who were baptized in accordance with His teaching and commandments, that the Holy Spirit is given in baptism, and that through the Holy Spirit baptism is made a cleansing remedy for the stains sunk deeply into us, because of having been born and living in the passions. Although Christ had no need of cleansing even as man, since He was born of a pure Virgin and lived completely without sin, He was purified for our sake, just as it was for our sake that He had deigned to be born.

16. Christ was baptized by John, and as He went up from the water the heavens were opened to Him and the voice of the Father was heard from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). The Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove, showing those present the one to whom the voice from above bore witness. In this way He was declared to be truly the Son, the Father in heaven was manifested as being truly the Father, and the Spirit too was made known as proceeding from the Father and resting

upon the Father's rightful Son. The grace of the Son, of His Father and of the Spirit came to dwell in the baptismal water, such that when it touched those baptized later following His example, they would be divinely regenerated, and mystically renewed and re-created in such a way that they would no longer be from the Old Adam and so attract the curse. Instead they would be born of the New Adam and so have God's blessing, not being children of the flesh, but God's children, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God through Jesus Christ (John 1:13).

17. Even if the heavy burden of mortal flesh still weighs them down so as to exercise, test and correct them, and so that they might forsake the wretchedness of this world, invisibly, however, they have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27), so they can strive to share in His manner of life here and now, and afterwards, when they depart hence, to be partakers of His blessedness, radiance and incorruption. Just as through one man, Adam, liability[215] to death passed down by heredity to those born afterwards, so the grace of eternal and heavenly life passed down from the one divine and human Word to all those born again of Him (Rom. 5:12–15, *cf.* 1 Cor. 15:21–22). Heaven is open to them to receive them in due course if, increasing in faith in God and righteousness according to faith, they receive power to become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, sharing in His incorruptible life and immortality, inseparably united with Him and enjoying His glory (Rom. 8:17–18). Heaven was closed to us before, and we were children of wrath (*cf.* Eph. 2:3), as God had justly abandoned us because of our sin and disobedience. Through Christ's sinless human nature, however, and His obedience to God (*cf.* Rom. 5:19), we who hold fast to Christ have become favoured children and beloved sons. Heaven has been opened to us, God's Spirit descends on us and abides in us, and in time we shall be carried up to heaven through Him. He who raised Christ from the dead will quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit dwelling within us (*cf.* Rom. 8:11), and transfigure our lowly bodies, making them like Christ's glorious body (*cf.* Phil. 3:21). Through Christ we have obtained immortality and have been called up to heaven, and our nature is enthroned on the right hand of majesty in heaven far above every principality and power (Eph. 1:21).

18. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and love of God (*cf.* Rom. 11:33)! In His wisdom, power and love for mankind God knew how to transform incomparably for the better the falls resulting from

our self-willed waywardness. If the Son of God had not come down from heaven we should have had no hope of going up to heaven. If He had not become incarnate, suffered in the flesh, risen and ascended for our sake, we should not have known God's surpassing love for us. If He had not taken flesh and endured the passion while we were still ungodly, we should not have desisted from the pride which so often lifts us up and drags us down. Now that we have been exalted without contributing anything, we stay humble, and as we regard with understanding the greatness of God's promise and benevolence we grow in humility; from which comes salvation.

19. The Son of God became man to show to what heights He would lead us, that we might not be conceited as if we had reversed the defeat by our own efforts. Being twofold in nature, He could truly be a mediator, joining each of the two to the other.[216] He loosed the bond of sin and cleansed the stain that comes of being joined with flesh. He showed God's love for us, and demonstrated that we had sunk so deeply into evil as to make it necessary for God to become flesh. In His flesh and His sufferings He became an example to us of humility and a healing remedy for pride. He made it clear that God created our nature good. He became the author and guarantor of the resurrection and eternal life, delivering us from despair. By becoming the Son of man and sharing our mortality, He made men sons of God and partakers of divine immortality. Human nature was shown to have been created in the image of God, unlike the rest of creation, and this kinship with God was such that human nature could be joined to Him in one person. He honoured this mortal flesh so that the proud spirits should not consider themselves, or be considered, favoured above mankind or as deified because of being without bodies and apparently immortal.[217] He united men and God, who were by nature separate, becoming a mediator through His twofold nature. What more can be said? If the Word of God had not been made flesh, the Father would not have been shown to be truly Father, nor the Son to be truly Son, nor would the Holy Spirit have been shown to shine forth from the Father. God would not have been shown to be essence and hypostases, but would have seemed to be merely some sort of energy observed in creatures, as was said by the foolish sages of old, and now by those who think like Barlaam and Akindynus.[218]

20. As we have said, the Lord manifested Himself and His plan for our salvation so far as was possible. He revealed the Father as being

truly His Father on high. To such as were willing of His contemporaries and those who came after them He indicated the way back to the Father. He urged them on, summoned them and guided them through His way of life, His teaching, His miracles and His prophecies, and even more by His truly divine and supernatural wisdom from which nothing is hidden, either things to come or the obscure movements deep in our hearts. However, those who obeyed Him had to be free of servitude to the devil. Man was led into his captivity when he experienced God's wrath, this wrath being the good God's just abandonment of man. God had to be reconciled with the human race, for otherwise mankind could not be set free from the servitude.

21. A sacrifice was needed to reconcile the Father on high with us and to sanctify us, since we had been soiled by fellowship with the evil one. There had to be a sacrifice which both cleansed and was clean, and a purified, sinless priest. We needed a resurrection not just of our souls but of our bodies, and a resurrection for those to come after us. This liberation and resurrection, and also the ascension and the everlasting heavenly order, not only had to be bestowed upon us but also confirmed. And all this was necessary not just for those alive at the time and those to come, but also for people born since the beginning of time. In Hades there were far more of such people than there were people to be born later, and far more were to believe and be saved at once. I think that is why Christ came at the end of the ages. He had to preach the gospel to those in Hades (*cf.* 1 Pet. 3:19), to reveal His great plan for salvation to them and to give them complete freedom from the demons who held them captive, as well as sanctification and promises for the future. It was clearly necessary for Christ to descend into Hades, but all these things were done with justice, without which God does not act.

22. In addition to what we have mentioned, the deceiver had to be justly deceived and to lose the riches he had seized and deceitfully acquired. For evil had taken control through cunning, and the originator of evil continually boasted of this fact. The devil would not have ceased from boasting if he had been subdued by God's sovereign power and not pulled down from his authority by justice and wisdom. Since everybody turns aside to evil in deed or word or thought, or in two or all of these, we defile the purity given by God to human nature, and need to be sanctified. Sanctification is accomplished by each person's offering and sacrifice of firstfruits, but as the firstfruits have

to be pure, we are not able to offer such a sacrifice to God. This is why Christ was revealed, who alone is undefiled and presented Himself as an offering and a sacrifice of firstfruits to the Father for our sake, that all we who look towards Him, believe in Him and attach ourselves to Him through obedience will appear through Him before the face of God, obtain forgiveness and be sanctified. The Lord referred to this in the Gospels, saying, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19). Not only did the offering have to be pure and sinless but so did the high priest who offered it. As the apostle says, "Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26).

23. For such reasons as these the Word of God was made flesh and dwelt among us, appearing on earth and living with men. He took upon Himself our human flesh, which was subject to suffering and death, even though it was completely pure, and He used it in His divine wisdom as a bait to hook the serpent, the originator of evil, through the Cross, and set free the whole human race which he had enslaved. When a tyrant falls, all those he tyrannized are liberated. This is what the Lord Himself said in the Gospels, that the strong man was bound and his goods spoiled (*cf.* Matt. 12:29). His possessions were taken as spoil by Christ, and were set free, justified, filled with light and endowed with divine gifts. As David sings, "Thou hast ascended on high", up on to the Cross, or, if you wish, up to heaven, "thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast given gifts to men" (Eph. 4:8, *cf.* Ps. 68:18).

24. Christ overturned the devil through suffering and His flesh which He offered as a sacrifice to God the Father, as a pure and altogether holy victim – how great is His gift! – and reconciled God to our human race. He underwent the passion according to the Father's will and became for us, who were destroyed through disobedience and saved through obedience, an example of how obedient we should be. He showed that death was far more precious than the devil's immortality, because it procured life that was truly immortal, life that will not be subject to the second and eternal death, to the coming damnation, which is worse than ten thousand deaths, but stays with Christ in the heavenly dwellings. When Christ had risen from the dead on the third day and had shown Himself alive to His disciples, He ascended into heaven. He remained immortal and bestowed on us, with complete assurance, resurrection, immortality and truly

blessed, eternal, incorruptible life in heaven. By means of the one death and resurrection of His flesh, He healed our twofold death and freed us from our double captivity of soul and body.

25. When the evil one was justly abandoned by the God of true life because of his voluntary sin, he became a dead spirit. He was the fullness of wickedness, the captain of envy, crafty, and the originator of evil, and he could not bear man to live in the place of delight, that is to say, in paradise. He beguiled him with deadly advice and made him share his own sin and spiritual deadness. Of necessity bodily death followed this spiritual death, so the evil one caused our double death by his single death. Having flung us down even lower than himself, he appeared to be great and exalted, and boasted that he had outwitted us with his intelligence and reduced us to slavery. As he was immortal, he appeared, alas, to be our God. Even after death our souls, having been deserted by God, fell to his lot and he dragged them down into Hades, and shut them up in seemingly inescapable prisons.

26. God our Creator had mercy upon our wretchedness and graciously willed to descend to the place where we had been thrown, to call us back. He alone appeared free among the dead (Ps. 88:5), descending with His living spirit. Not only that, but He radiated divine light and possessed life-giving power, so that He could enlighten those who sat in darkness and spiritually quicken those in that place who believed in Him. However, on that day when He stands up to raise the whole human race to life and judge it, He will quicken the bodies of all as well. As the leader of the apostles teaches us in his letter, "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Pet. 4:6). A little earlier in the epistle he shows us who it was that preached the gospel to the dead in Hades and why, saying, "Christ hath once suffered for sinners, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but alive in the spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison" (*cf.* 1 Pet. 3:18–19), that is, to the souls of those who have died since the beginning of time.

27. As the evil one procured our twofold death by means of his single spiritual death, so the good Lord healed this twofold death of ours through His single bodily death, and through the one resurrection of His body gave us a twofold resurrection. By means of His bodily death He destroyed him who had power over our souls and

bodies in death (*cf.* Heb. 2:14), and rescued us from his tyranny over them both. The evil one clothed himself in the serpent to deceive man, but the Word of God put on man's nature to trick the trickster. He received this nature in its undeceived and pure state, and kept it so to the end, offering it as firstfruits to the Father for sanctification from ourselves for ourselves. If the Word of God had not assumed a mortal and passible body, how else could the devil have been deceived, how else would he, who is envy itself, have even dared to attack Him?[219]

28. The evil one did not attack the Word until he knew that He had a passible body. While He was fasting in the wilderness for forty days He was not hungry – for although He was clothed in a body that could suffer, it only acted and suffered those things proper to a body when permitted to by the almighty power united to it.[220] However, when He had fasted for forty days, according to the Gospel, afterwards He was hungry (Matt. 4:2–11, Luke 4:2–13, *cf.* Mark 1:13). It was exactly then that the originator of evil dared for the first time to attack and set temptation before Him, striving to find a way in to attack His spirit. He was powerfully driven off, and when he made another general assault by means of sensual pleasures, he was mightily defeated and fled away unnerved, shattered and put to shame. Why was he beaten off when, emboldened by the suffering of Christ's body, he attacked? Because he had attempted to introduce sin into the sinless man (*cf.* 1 Tim. 2:5). He fled away shamefully beaten and Christ ceaselessly pursued him, chasing him out of demoniacs, healing diseased people in his power and raising the dead, not just the newly dead, but those already decomposing, and all this by His command alone. He also expelled him from people's souls by preaching repentance and showing that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. He led souls towards faith and a way of life opposed to the enemy, transforming sinners and receiving them. Moreover, He gave His disciples power against demons. Obviously this was completely unendurable for Satan and the angels who fell with him.

29. If Satan imagined he could drive off the great strength brought to bear against him, would he neglect to do so? Would he tolerate Christ, who cast him out of men and brought down his longstanding tyranny over them, living among men? He rages furiously against Christ, since he knew from experience that His theandric soul[221] was far above all the passions of which he, Satan, was the author, and completely immune from death, which he had created for men

by himself. Although Christ's body was both passible and mortal,[222] Satan was not himself able to impose such a death, so he moved the minds of the disobedient Jews towards murdering Him. He provoked them to unrestrained jealousy and fury against Him, because they too had been censured and rejected by Christ as evil. Satan stirred them up and persuaded them to murder Him in a dishonourable way suitable only for criminals and the ungodly, believing that he would thus cast Him out of the world and make His name meaningless on earth. He was confident that when Christ died he would hold His soul imprisoned in hell, just as he had held the souls of all mankind since the beginning of time.

30. This is how the deceiver was deceived. He attacked Christ's passible and mortal flesh, and unwittingly brought the light into his dark and terrible caverns and set the giver of life over the souls he had tyrannized through spiritual death. Not only that, but he brought those who had died into contact with Christ's body which offered resurrection and immortality, while he was hastening to deliver it to death and the grave. The Lord could have evaded these plots of the devil, but He did not wish to. Rather, it was His will to undergo the passion for our sake, as this was why He became the God-man. Had He not been human, it would not have been possible for Him to suffer; and had He not been God, and remained impassible in His divinity, He could not have suffered death in the flesh for our sake, thereby bestowing upon us resurrection, or rather, rising from the dead[223] and immortality. Nor would it be believable that it was possible for Him not to suffer, but that He chose willingly to do so in order to show that His humility was to liberate us and lift us up, teaching us to wage a practical struggle for righteousness unto death, if need be. To those who believed in the resurrection He proclaimed the power of immortality – not just that they would go on for ever, but that they would continue without eternal destruction, the terrifying eternal damnation prepared for the devil, and live for ever with the holy angels, sharing their enjoyment of the incorruptible and never-ending kingdom.

31. For this reason the Lord patiently endured for our sake a death He was not obliged to undergo, to redeem us, who were obliged to suffer death, from servitude to the devil and death, by which I mean death both of the soul and of the body, temporary and eternal. Since He gave His blood, which was sinless and therefore guiltless, as a

ransom for us who were liable to punishment because of our sins, He redeemed us from our guilt. He forgave us our sins, tore up the record of them on the Cross and delivered us from the devil's tyranny (*cf.* Col. 2:14–15). The devil was caught by the bait. It was as if he opened his mouth and hastened to pour out for himself our ransom, the Master's blood, which was not only guiltless but full of divine power. Then instead of being enriched by it he was strongly bound and made an example in the Cross of Christ. So we were rescued from his slavery and transformed into the kingdom of the Son of God. Before we had been vessels of wrath (*cf.* Rom. 9:22–23), but we were made vessels of mercy by Him who bound the one who was strong compared to us, and seized his goods. Then Christ rightly became our King, after being wrongfully murdered at the devil's suggestion, and having mysteriously conquered the originator of evil by righteousness. He clearly demonstrated His almighty power by overcoming bodily death, rising from the dead on the third day, ascending into heaven and sitting on the right hand of the Father together with the flesh which He wore for our sake and in which He died. He proved to us that we would rise from the dead, be restored to heaven and inherit the kingdom if, imitating Him as far as we could, we overthrew the author of sin through righteousness, beating off his attacks and his incitement to evil passions, and courageously bearing his treachery.

32. The Lord has given us rebirth through divine baptism and sealed us with the grace of the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (*cf.* Eph. 4:30), but He has allowed us still to have a body which is mortal and passible.[224] Although He has cast out the teacher of evil from the treasure houses of our soul, yet He allows him to attack from without. This is so that anybody who has been renewed in accordance with the new covenant, that is to say, the gospel of Christ, who lives in good works and repentance, despises the delights of this life, endures suffering and is trained in the enemy's assaults, can be made ready to receive immortality and the incorruptible good things to come in the new age.[225]

33. Believers should rejoice with hope, and since this life will have an end, should be prudent and glad as they wait with faith for the eternal blessedness of the life to come. They should patiently endure, with the understanding that comes from faith, the wretchedness to which this life has been justly condemned, and resist, by means of long-suffering, sin, its author and ally, and his underlings, to the point

of shedding their own blood if need be (*cf.* Rom. 8:16–18). Except for sin nothing in this life, even death itself, is really evil, even if it causes suffering. The company of the saints brought bodily sufferings upon themselves. The martyrs made the violent death which others inflicted on them into something magnificent, a source of life, glory and the eternal heavenly kingdom, because they exploited it in a good way that pleased God. That is why, when Christ had abolished death by His resurrection, He still let it remain for His followers, along with this life's other misfortunes, so that Christians should be exercised by these means for the sake of truth in both their lives and beliefs, and be made ready through the new covenant for the coming new age which will never grow old.

34. For those who bear them with faith, these misfortunes serve to correct their sins, to exercise and test them, to lead them to abandon the wretchedness of this life, and to encourage them to long fervently and seek constantly for everlasting adoption as sons and redemption, the truly new life and blessedness. Our adoption as sons and our renewal in Christ in both soul and body is complex.[226] There is a starting point and perfection, and an intermediate stage in between.[227] The grace of baptism, which is called the washing of regeneration, inaugurates this action in us, providing remission of all our sins and of the guilt[228] of the curse. Perfection will come with the resurrection of life for which believers hope, and the promise of the age to come. The intermediate stage is life according to Christ's gospel, by which the godly person is nourished, grows and is renewed, making progress day by day in the knowledge of God, righteousness and sanctification. Gradually he reduces and cuts away his eagerness for things below, and transfers his longing from what is visible, physical and temporary to what is invisible, spiritual and eternal.

35. The great Paul, eye-witness of unspeakable spiritual mysteries and a chosen vessel, teaches us of this threefold renewal in Christ when he writes in the Epistle to the Romans, "So many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death" (Rom. 6:3–4). This is the beginning of our renewal. Christ tore up the handwriting of our transgressions on the Cross and made all those who were buried with Him through baptism guiltless. Hear also about the intermediate stage after this starting point: "That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should

walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Then he goes on to refer to the perfection of this renewal, declaring that, "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom. 6:5). Later he reveals more clearly both the starting-point and the finish of this renewal and our adoption as sons, saying, "Ourselves, also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption" (Rom. 8:23). By "firstfruits of the Spirit" he means the sanctification and grace of the Spirit, which we receive in holy baptism, when we are delivered from sins, renewed and freely justified by Christ's grace. These are the firstfruits of the good things to come. However, by saying "waiting for the adoption" he shows that he is referring, not to adoption through baptism, but to that future, perfect, unfailing adoption, and he adds, "to wit, the redemption of our body", that is, its redemption from passions and corruption. The adoption of sons which takes place here and now often fails, but that adoption which comes about through bringing the dead back to life and resurrection is truly perfect and sure.

36. When Paul writes to the Philipians he expresses the aim of this renewal even more clearly, saying, "We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20–21). As Christ died in bodily weakness and dishonour, and rose in power and divine glory, so those who live like Christ are sown through death, to quote Paul again, in weakness and dishonour, and are raised in power and glory (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:43). They receive a glorified, incorruptible body like Christ's after the resurrection when He became the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18) and the firstfruits of them that sleep (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:20). This bodily renewal is seen now through faith and hope rather than with our eyes, not being reality yet. The soul's renewal, on the other hand, begins, as we have said, with holy baptism through the remission of sins and is nourished and grows through righteousness in faith. The soul is continually renewed in the knowledge of God and the virtues associated with this knowledge, and will reach perfection in the future contemplation of God face to face. Now, however, it sees through a glass, darkly (*cf.* 1 Cor. 13:12).

37. John, whom Christ loved especially, received both types of renewal, of body and of soul, and says, "Now are we the sons of God". This is the starting point of adoption. However, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we

shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). This is the perfection of the adoption of sons and renewal which God bestowed on us in Christ, and of which John says in his Gospel that, "Christ gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12–13).

38. When he says that we were born not of the flesh but of God, he proclaims regeneration and adoption through holy baptism, and when he says in his epistle, "Now are we sons of God" he means by baptism. On the other hand, when he says that God gave us power to become sons of God, as though we were not yet sons, he is referring to the perfection of adoption. A new born babe has the natural ability to become wise, and is potentially wise, then when he grows older, if he earnestly pursues wisdom, he will actually be wise. In the same way, someone who has been born again through holy baptism has received the ability to be fashioned like the glorious body of the Son of God (*cf.* Phil. 3:21). If he walks in newness of life and lives according to Christ and His gospel, when, in the resurrection, this potential progresses to realization, he will have, not by faith and hope but in truth and reality, a glorified and incorruptible body such as Christ had after the resurrection, and a spirit even more glorious. The dead bodies of the ungodly will also be resurrected, but not in heavenly glory, for they will not be fashioned in the likeness of the glorious body of Christ, nor will they see the vision of God promised to believers, which is called the kingdom of God. "Let the wicked be taken away, that he behold not the glory of the Lord", as the Scripture says (Isa. 26:10 Lxx). But those born and nurtured according to Christ, who, as far as they were able, attained to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13), will also obtain the blessing of the divine radiance[229] and will, according to the Scripture, "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father" (Matt. 13:43).

39. Before the transgression, Adam shared in this divine illumination[230] and brilliance.[231] He was clothed in the true robe of glory and was not naked, nor was he ugly in his nakedness, but was truly unspeakably better adorned than those who wear diadems embellished with much gold and precious stones. When our human nature was stripped of this divine illumination and radiance as a result of the ugly transgression, the Word of God had mercy on this nature and in His compassion took it upon Himself. On Mount Tabor he showed it clothed once more to His chosen disciples (Matt. 17:1–9, Mark 9:2–9,

Luke 9:28–37, *cf.* 2 Pet. 1:16–18), proving to all what we had once been, and what those of us who believed in Him and attained to perfection in Him would be through Him in the age to come.

40. You will find that the earnest of this perfection of those who live according to Christ is openly given here and now to God's saints. They reap already, so to speak, the good of the age to come. Moses foreshadowed this, because the children of Israel could not gaze upon the glory of his face (Exod. 34:30–35). Later, and more clearly, the Lord Himself shone so brightly on the mountain in the divine light that even the chosen disciples, who had received spiritual power from Him, could not stand and look at that radiance (Matt. 17:6, *cf.* Luke 9:34). Stephen's face was like the face of an angel, according to the Scripture (Acts 6:15), and he looked up from earth into the heights of heaven, where Christ sat on the right hand of the majesty, and he saw the heavenly glory of God (Acts 7:55–56). It would take too long to recount and tell at length of the others who received here the earnest of the good things to come and were blessed to obtain this divine illumination and radiance.

41. May we too attain to this through the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sake was made man, suffered, was buried, rose from the dead, took our fallen human nature up to heaven and honoured it by sitting on the Father's right hand. To our Lord Jesus Christ belong glory, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the all-holy and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY SEVENTEEN

Explaining the Mystery of the Sabbath And of The Lord's Day

AND REFERRING TO THE GOSPEL OF NEW SUNDAY

TODAY WE KEEP THE FEAST OF NEW SUNDAY,[232] or rather we celebrate the inauguration of the New Lord's Day. So our word today is intended to reveal a little more of the mystery of Sunday to your charity, as far as time allows. If this is a great and exalted mystery, and not even its more accessible aspects are easy for everyone to understand, we must give thanks to the Lord of all who gave His name to this day, and who, through His coming in the flesh, bestowed on those who draw near to Him through faith things which are perhaps a little difficult for our mind and reason to grasp.

2. But heed the sense of my words, all of you. And if anyone is unable to understand everything, he will grasp the full meaning from the little he does understand, since the Holy Spirit's teaching is a word of light.[233] In six days God not only made and adorned the whole visible world, He also created and brought to life the only creature with senses and a mind: man (Gen. 1:1–27; 2:7).[234] To him He granted dominion over all the animals and plants throughout the world (Gen. 1:28). Then on the seventh day God rested from all His works, as we are taught by Moses (Gen. 2:2), who was born later, but beheld the foundation of the world long before his time, or rather as the Holy Spirit in His love for mankind sounds in our ears and souls through Moses' words. "And God", it says, "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (Gen. 2:3). Why did He bless and hallow that day on which He did nothing? For he did not bless and hallow the first day as

the most highly exalted, which is why it was referred to by Moses as "one" and not as "first" (Gen. 1:5 LXX), that day on which God brought forth everything out of nothing all at once,[235] and illuminated it with new light, although He had not yet put it in due order, assigning everything to its place and kind. And if He did not bless and sanctify that first day, why not the following day, on which He established the great firmament, and stretched out around us the first heaven and after it the second? Then again, why did He not bless the day after that, or the ones following, during which the earth was formed by the waters drawing back and took all nature as its adornment, the heavens received the two great lights for eyes, and the birds and sea creatures took their being from the waters by divine command, each after their kind?

3. If we leave those days to one side, why did God not bless the sixth day on which He not only drew out of the earth the living souls of reptiles and cattle, but also demonstrated a work worthy of His own Counsel? He crowned the whole of creation, brought together into unity the senses and the mind, greatest of all, put Himself within His creature through His divine grace, and showed man as a living being upon earth in His own image and likeness, capable of knowing Him. So why did He not bless and sanctify that day instead of the seventh, which was a day of inaction? As I want to explain the matter and offer a solution to the problem, I must first, for the sake of the more learned among you gathered here, refute those who have not given a good explanation. There are some, such as Josephus and Philo and their followers,[236] who revere the number seven calling it "unbegotten" (a prime number),[237] and also "virgin" as it does not "beget", or multiply, like, in their opinion, the divinity. For they cannot understand that when God begot the Son He did not set aside virginity, but begot Him without union, variation or passion.[238] Those who contend that these properties of the number seven are the reason why only the seventh day was given God's blessing misrepresent not only God, denying His Fatherhood, but also the number seven itself. Every number originates from units, and since seven is a number it is not "unbegotten". They say, however, that it is not the product of any factors greater than unity, but being unbegotten does not mean not being the product of many, but not being the product of anything at all, which is not the case with the number seven.

4. Furthermore, if the seventh day was blessed because of the properties of that number, it would be much better if the first day had received the blessings, especially as Moses referred to it as "one day". For the number one is completely unbegotten. They object, however, that it produces other numbers and is a factor of every number, including the numbers up to ten, whereas seven is not the factor of any number between one and ten, and is therefore "virgin". Let us say for the sake of argument that to be virgin means not to beget, although this is not necessarily so.[239] If something produces not small but large numbers then clearly the more it produces the further it is from virginity. Now when seven is multiplied or added it does not generate any of the numbers from one to ten, but it does produce many numbers greater than ten. So how can we call it "virgin"? But slipping away from our grasp, these people ascend, as it were, to the moon and the orbits of the stars, of which they say there are seven.[240] They point out that the moon becomes a half moon in seven days and a full moon in a further seven, and wanes in the same manner. For they fail to realize that if the number seven is honourable for such reasons, the other numbers are no less so, especially the first number of all. The whole visible world is one, and so are the heavens,[241] or at most two.[242] There is one sun in the universe and one moon, not to mention that all things were framed by the one God who is before all and through all and above all (*cf.* Eph. 4:6, Col. 1:16–17, Rom. 9:5), proclaiming the true unity to all who understand aright.

5. If the stars and their orbits are all spherical and the universe encircles them, this circle has two components: a point and a line, and without these two nothing visible could exist. So two is the number most useful and necessary to the world. However, just as there are not only lines and planes in the universe, so the number three exists, I shall not even mention this number's other advantages. On the other hand, since each of the objects we have mentioned is not just a circle but a solid sphere, they could not exist without the number four, as they have to have another dimension, so four is equally worthy. Similar arguments can be put forward for five, and above all for six. For this is the first of the perfect numbers equal to the sum of its divisors, which is why the world was completed on the sixth day.[243]

6. Those who hold the number seven in honour for reasons such as these unwittingly honour not just that number but absolutely all of them, since each of them has no lack of similar things which can

be said in its favour. Numbers were created by God along with everything else,[244] and everything created by God is good and very good, as the Creator Himself bore witness through Moses (Gen. 1:31). So whatever aspect of numbers you subject to scrutiny you will find good and very good, wonderfully proportioned within itself and in relation to others. But it was not simply their numerical order which distinguished one day from another. In no way did Moses describe God as admiring the products of numbers, but as approving the things He Himself brought forth day by day. Not even the seventh day is praiseworthy because of its number. So now let us tell you why it was that God particularly blessed and hallowed that day, using Moses' words as our starting-point. "And God rested", he says, "on the seventh day from all his work which he had made" (Gen. 2:2). Then he adds that "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it", and immediately goes on to refer to the reason for this blessing, repeating, "because that in it God had rested from all his works which he had begun to make" (Gen. 2:3 Lxx). So there were certain of God's works which he had neither begun to make nor ceased from making, as the Lord Himself revealed to us, saying, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17).

7. God wanted to impart to us a strong awareness of works of this kind, and to demonstrate that they are more to be sought after than any works perceptible to the senses. So He blessed and sanctified the seventh day, on which He ceased making the visible creation, so that this day might be like an ascent, by means of rest, from things below to those better things above. To quote the great Dionysius, God, "in His superabundant goodness, goes out of Himself and transcending all things comes down into all things, in accordance with His ecstatic, supraessential power which is inseparable from Him".[245] Condescending in His love for man, as He willed and as was fitting, He made this visible world of ours. Then on the seventh day He went up again, as behoved God, to His own heights, which He had not left, and showed that His rest on that day was still more blessed than what had gone before. In this way He taught us to seek to enter, as far as we are able, into that rest,[246] which is contemplation according to the mind, and ascent to God by that means.[247] The apostle too explicitly urges us towards this rest. Having referred to God's words through the psalmist about the Jewish race, "Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest" (Ps. 95:11), he continues, "He spake

in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works" (Heb. 4:4). A little further on he writes, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest" (Heb. 4:11). For anyone who enters into it, rests from his works as God did from His.

8. Do you desire to learn more exactly what this rest is, and how we too can enter into it? If we find out which works God did not begin because they were without beginning, we shall better comprehend both this rest and how to enter into it. What are these works? The psalmist and prophet gives us the first part of the answer when he writes of God, "The works of his are verity and judgment" (Ps. 111:7). The knowledge of things that exist and the foreknowledge of things to come[248] are a work of God without beginning, and it would not be wrong to refer to this as verity.[249] Judgment and providence are an unceasing work of God without beginning, for everything that exists required both judgment[250] and providence[251] even before it came into being, since it had to be produced, and once in existence had to be prevented from ceasing to be after a time. It had either, in some cases, eventually to change for its own good or the good of all, or else, in other cases, to remain unchanged. Another of God's works without beginning is the process of returning to Himself,[252] which is motivated by the contemplation of Himself which had no starting point.[253]

9. If you observe carefully and intelligently, you will find many things which fall into the same category as these divine activities. If, brethren, each of us sets aside our continuous, troublesome, worldly cares and the works associated with them, and sits listening to the Spirit's teaching, firstly he will be praised by the Lord, who did not approve of Martha because she was troubled by many cares, even though her efforts were for His sake. On the other hand, He said that Mary, who sat listening at His feet, had "Chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from her" (Luke 10:41–42).

10. Do you see what unceasing work means? When you receive into your mind these words of the Spirit's teaching, meditate upon them and prefer them in your soul's reasoning to every other passionate and worldly thought, ordering your life according to them for the sake of your salvation, then you too will have verity and judgment as your work, speaking the truth in your heart, as the psalmist and prophet says (*cf.* Ps. 15:2). If you raise your mind above every thought, however good, and turn it wholly towards itself, by means of constant attention and unceasing prayer, you too will truly enter into the divine

rest and obtain the blessing of the seventh day. You will see yourself, and through yourself you will be carried up to the vision of God. For, as it is said, the end of prayer is to be caught up towards the Lord.[254] This is one of the reasons for the blessing of the seventh day, which Moses indicated through the law by commanding that the seventh day be a day of rest – but only of rest from works which benefit the body, for it is a day of activity in the works proper to the soul.

11. Another reason why that day was blessed is that He who formed this world in six days foresaw that man would turn towards evil and would, as a result, go back to the ground, descend to Hades and be imprisoned there, and this whole world would grow old and useless because of man, but would be renewed by God becoming man. This renewal was effected when God incarnate descended into Hades through death and declared there on the sabbath the recall of souls. It was because He foresaw that this would happen on the sabbath that He rightly deemed it the only day worthy to be blessed. However, although this work was secretly made ready on the seventh day, the sabbath, everything was clearly brought to light and accomplished when the body too had been summoned to immortality through the Lord's resurrection on the eighth day. This is why we call it the Lord's Day.[255] As Friday, the day of preparation, stands in relation to the sabbath, so is the sabbath in comparison with Sunday, which is obviously superior to it. As perfection and reality surpass beginning, pattern and shadow, so is Sunday more excellent and honourable, because on it the exceedingly blessed work was finished, and on it we await the General Resurrection of all, the perfect entry of the saints into the divine rest and dissolution of the world into its elements.

12. Whatever is said in praise of the seventh day applies even more to the eighth, for the latter fulfils the former. It was Moses who unwittingly first ascribed honour to the eighth day, the Lord's Day. The Jubilee year (Lev. 25:8ff), which Moses regarded as a year of forgiveness and named accordingly, was not counted among the "weeks of years" under the law, but came after them all, and was an eighth year proclaimed after the last of these seven year periods. Moses did the same with regard to periods of seven weeks. However, the lawgiver did not only introduce in this hidden way the dignity of this eighth day, which we call the Lord's Day because it is dedicated to the Lord's resurrection, but also on the feast named "Trumpets" referred to the eighth day as the "final solemn assembly" (*cf.* Lev. 23:36 Lxx, Num. 29:35),[256] meaning the completion

and fulfilment of all the feasts. At that point he clearly said that the eighth day too would be called holy for us, proclaiming in advance how divine, glorious and august Sunday was to be after everything pertaining to the law had passed away.

13. Moses esteemed the seventh day because it led into the truly honourable eighth day. Just as the law given through him is honorable in so far as it leads to Christ (*cf.* Gal. 3:24), so the seventh day is hououraable because it leads into the eighth day on which the Lord's resurrection took place. The eighth day comes next after the seventh, and if you look carefully you will find that after the seventh day, when we are told that all the dead from past ages were resurrected, on the eighth day Christ rose. Not only was Christ's resurrection accomplished on the eighth day, but it was both the eighth day in relation to the day before, and also the first day in relation to the hoped-for resurrection, the rising again, of all men in Christ. That is why Christ is hymned as "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20) and "the first begotten of the dead" (Rev. 1:5). In the same way, Sunday is not just the day eighth in order after the preceding days, but the first of the days that come after. So it becomes in its turn the New Day, the first of all days, which we call the Lord's Day, and which Moses referred to not as the first day but as "one day" (Gen. 1:5 LXX),[257] being exalted above the others and the prelude of the one day without evening of the age to come.

14. You will understand how much better Sunday is than other feastdays from what follows. Every other festival comes round once a year, but the Lord's Day comes round four times every month, and this frequent recurrence makes the whole year a year of true remission for us, a year acceptable to the Lord (*cf.* Isa. 61:2). It was in order to teach us to celebrate it in practice at the end of each week that the Lord first appeared to the disciples inside the house while Thomas was absent (John 20:19–24). He proved He was alive and gave them peace. By His breathing upon them He renewed the divine breath given in the beginning (Gen. 2:7), and endowed them with the grace of the Holy Spirit, imbuing them with divine power to bind and loose sins. He made them sharers in the exercise of His heavenly lordship,[258] saying to them, "receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:22–23).

15. The Lord granted them this power and grace when He appeared to them on the very day of His resurrection, obviously a Sunday.

Then, letting the intervening days of the week elapse, He appeared in the same manner and in the same house, on the eighth day, the Sunday we celebrate today, to inaugurate His festival and to bring the hesitant Thomas to faith. According to the Saviour's beloved evangelist and disciple, "After eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you" (John 20:26).

16. You will see that it was Sunday when the disciples assembled and the Lord came to them. On Sunday He approached them for the first time as they were gathered together, and eight days later, when Sunday came round again, He appeared to their assembly. Christ's Church continually reflects these gatherings by holding its meetings mostly on Sundays, and we come among you and preach what pertains to salvation and lead you towards piety and a godly way of life.

17. Let no one out of laziness or continuous worldly occupations miss these holy Sunday gatherings, which God Himself handed down to us, lest he be justly abandoned by God and suffer like Thomas, who did not come at the right time. If you are detained and do not attend on one occasion, make up for it the next time, bringing yourself to Christ's Church. Otherwise you may remain uncured, suffering from unbelief in your soul because of deeds or words, and failing to approach Christ's surgery[259] to receive, like the divine Thomas, holy healing.[260] There exist not only thoughts and words of faith but also deeds and acts of faith – "Shew me", it says, "thy faith by thy works" (*cf.* Jas. 2:18) – and if someone abandons these and is completely distanced from the Church of Christ and given over wholly to worthless pursuits, his faith is dead, or non-existent, and he himself has become dead through sin.

18. But are some of you puzzled that Christ could enter when the doors were shut, since He had a body? Apparently you are unaware that spiritual things must be compared with spiritual and understood on their own terms, as the holy apostle says (*cf.* 1 Cor. 2:13). Christ did not spoil the womb of the Virgin who bore Him in the flesh. He did not undo the signs of virginity when He was born, but kept them intact, even though at that time His body was subject to suffering and death. So it is not at all surprising if now that He had immortalized the humanity He had assumed and His body was no longer subject to death, He could enter through closed doors. However, as He undoubtedly had a body free from suffering[261] and death, how was it that on His Side and His Hands He had marks of wounds and holes from the

nails? For the evangelist tells us that the Lord said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing" (John 20:27). Why did He have scars? It would be impossible for a mortal, suffering body to display marks of wounds and nails and to remain healthy and sound. On the other hand, an immortal body without suffering can show the scars and wounds it suffered to anyone at will,[262] and nevertheless continue free from suffering and death.

19. This enables me to understand something else: that those who have suffered for Christ are adorned for ever with their wounds. Windows in a house do not make it less safe and are not something ugly but a necessary decoration for a building, to let in light and allow those within to look out. In the same way, the body's sufferings for Christ's sake and the resultant wounds become for those who bear them windows to let in the light without evening. And when that light shines forth they will be recognizable by the divine beauty and radiance of their wounds and not by their ugliness. Their scars will not be obliterated when suffering comes to an end, in so far as they procure immortality.[263]

20. Christ's body held within it the fount of divine light, which shone forth spiritually[264] to enlighten the mind of him who hesitated, so that Thomas cried out at once, with perfect theology, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). The Lord said to him, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29), showing that those who saw the Lord with their own eyes are not in greater glory than those who have been brought through them to faith in Him. He did not say "yet believe" but "yet have believed", because with the divine power of foreknowledge whereby He saw everything before it happened, future events were like present facts.

21. I shall tell you, in your charity, something which has just occurred to me. I notice that Thomas lost his faith when he was absent, but when he was together with the believers his faith did not in any way fall short. So I have the idea that if only a sinner will flee the company of immoral men and associate with the just, he will never be found lacking in righteousness or the resultant salvation of his soul. It seems to me that the psalmist and prophet was hinting at this when he called blessed the man who avoided sitting with the scornful and being their companion (*cf.* Ps. 1:1). Another prophet writes, "Thou shalt not follow

the multitude to do evil" (Exod. 23:2), and the author of Proverbs says, "Where sinners gather, the fire breaks out" (Ecclus. 16:6),[265] "but he that walketh with wise men shall be wise" (Prov. 13:20).

22. So let us, brethren, meet together and often come to God's Church, where all who are truly godly are present and never stay away. When each of you enters the church, look for the more godly of those within, whom you can recognize just by seeing how they stand in attentive silence. Watch for those who are more pious and God-fearing than the rest, and go and attach yourself to them, and attend upon God with them. When you come out after the dismissal on the Lord's Day and are at leisure from earthly work for the sake of Him whose day it is, carefully search to see if there is an imitator of the apostles who mostly stays indoors, longing for God with silent prayer, psalmody and other suitable practices. Approach such a person and enter his small room with faith as though you were entering a heavenly place containing the Spirit's sanctifying power. Sit down beside him and stay with him as long as possible. Talk to him about God and divine matters, asking questions, humbly learning and appealing for help through prayer. If you do this, I know for sure that Christ will invisibly come to you, give peace within the thinking part of your soul,[266] increase your faith, strengthen your steadfastness, and in due time set you among His chosen in the heavenly kingdom.

23. May we all attain to this in Him who has now died and risen for us and afterwards will come in glory, Christ the King of the ages, to whom belongs glory unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY EIGHTEEN

ON THE SUNDAY OF THE MYRRHBEARERS[267]

IN WHICH IT IS SAID THAT THE MOTHER OF GOD WAS THE FIRST TO SEE THE LORD AFTER HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD

THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD is the renewal of human nature, and the renewal, re-creation and return to immortality of the first Adam who was swallowed up by death because of sin, and through death went back to the earth from which he was formed. In the beginning nobody saw Adam being made and brought to life, for no one existed yet at that time. However, once he had received the breath of life breathed into him by God (Gen. 2:7), a woman was the first to see him, for Eve was the first human being after him. In the same way, no one saw the second Adam, that is the Lord, rising from the dead, since none of his disciples were present and the soldiers keeping the tomb had been shaken with fear and became like dead men. But after the resurrection it was a woman who saw Him first of all, as we heard today in Mark's Gospel. "Now when Jesus", it says, "was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene" (Mark 16:9).

2. The evangelist seems to be telling us clearly that it was early morning when the Lord rose, that He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, and that He appeared at the very time of the resurrection. However, this is not what he says, as will become clear if we look more carefully. A little earlier Mark, together with the other evangelists, says that this Mary had also come earlier to the tomb with the other myrrhbearers, and finding it empty, they went away (Mark 16:1–8). So the Lord had risen long before that hour of the morning when she

saw Him. When the evangelist indicates the time of that earlier visit, he does not say simply "early", as he does here, but "very early in the morning". There they called the first hint of pale light on the horizon sunrise, as John shows by saying that Mary Magdalene came "early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre" (John 20:1).

3. According to John, she did not just come to the sepulchre at that time, but left it without seeing the Lord. She ran and came to Peter and John and told them, not that the Lord had risen, but that He had been taken from the sepulchre, as she was not yet aware of the resurrection (John 20:2). So the Lord did not appear to Mary absolutely first of all, but when full daylight had come. There is something which the evangelists tell us in a veiled way, but which I shall reveal to your charity. As was right and just, the Mother of God was the first person to receive from the Lord the Good News of the resurrection, and she saw Him risen and had the joy of His divine words before anyone else. She not only beheld Him with her eyes and heard Him with her ears, but was the first and only person to touch with her hands His most pure feet. If the evangelists do not say all this openly, it is because they do not want to put forward His Mother as a witness, lest they give unbelievers grounds for suspicion. As we are now, however, by the grace of the resurrection, addressing believers, and the subject of today's feast obliges us to clarify everything that concerns the myrrhbearers, this too shall be revealed, with leave from Him who said, "Nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest" (Luke 8:17).

4. The myrrhbearers are those women who followed the Lord in company with His Mother, who stayed with her at the time of the saving passion, and were intent upon anointing the Lord's body with myrrh. When Joseph and Nicodemus sought and obtained the Master's body from Pilate, they took it down from the Cross, wrapped it in linen cloths with glue-like spices, put it in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock and put a large stone in the doorway (John 19:38–42). Meanwhile, according to the evangelist Mark, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there watching (Mark 15:47), sitting opposite the tomb. When he refers to the other Mary he clearly means the Mother of God, for she was also called the mother of Joses and James, the sons of Joseph the Betrothed.[268] But they were not the only ones there watching when the Lord was being laid in the tomb. There were other women as well, as Luke tells us when he writes, "And the

women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid" (Luke 23:55). "It was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the Mother of James and other women that were with them" (Luke 24:10).

5. He says that they returned and bought spices and ointments (*cf.* Luke 23:56). As yet they did not fully understand that He Himself is truly the fragrance of life for those who come to Him in faith, though the smell of death to those who are disobedient to the end. The scent of His garments, that is of His body, is above all spices, and His "name is like ointment poured forth" (S. of S. 1:3), filling the whole world with divine fragrance. They prepared myrrh and spices, intending, on the one hand, to honour the dead, and, on the other, to assuage by their anointing the stench of the body as it decomposed, for the sake of those who wanted to stay beside it.

6. When they had prepared the ointments and spices, they rested on the sabbath according to the commandment (Luke 23:56), for they had not yet understood the true sabbaths, nor had they discovered that exceedingly blessed sabbath which brought human nature up from the nethermost regions of Hades to divine, heavenly heights full of light. "Now upon the first day of the week, at early dawn", as Luke tells us, "they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared" (*cf.* Luke 24:1). However, Matthew says that it was "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week" (Matt. 28:1), and refers to two women coming. According to John, "it was yet dark" (John 20:1), and only Mary Magdalene approached, whereas Mark tells us it was, "very early in the morning the first day of the week" (Mark 16:2), and there were three women who came (Mark 16:1). The evangelists all call Sunday the first day of the week, and by the expressions, "the end of the sabbath", "at the early dawn", "very early in the morning", and "early, when it was yet dark", they mean the time around dawn when light and darkness mingle. This is when the eastern horizon begins to grow light, heralding the day. If you were to observe the horizon from afar, you might see it beginning to be tinged with light at about the ninth hour of the night, with three hours still to go before full daylight.

7. The evangelists seem to a certain extent to disagree about what time it was and how many women were there. This is because, as we have said, there were many myrrhbearers and they did not come just once to the tomb, but two or three times. They came in groups, but not

always the same women. They all came at dawn, but not at precisely the same time, and Mary Magdalene came once more on her own and stayed longer. Each evangelist refers to one of the occasions when the myrrhbearers approached, and passes over the others. However, I conclude and infer from all the evangelists, as I said before, that the Theotokos was the first to come to the tomb of her Son and God, bringing Mary Magdalene with her. I gather this above all from the evangelist Matthew who says, "There came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary", who was obviously the Mother of God, "to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men" (Matt. 28:1–4).

8. All the other women came after the earthquake when the keepers had fled, and found the sepulchre open and the stone rolled away. The Virgin Mother, however, was there when the earthquake took place, the stone was rolled away, the tomb opened and the keepers were still present, though shaken with fear. When they got to their feet after the earthquake they immediately took to flight, whereas the Mother of God delighted herself in the sight without fear. It seems to me that the life-bearing tomb opened first for her sake (because everything in heaven above and on earth below was opened first for her, and through her for us) and that the angel shone like lightning on her account, so that even though it was still dark, by the angel's abundant light she could see not only the empty tomb, but also the graveclothes lying in order and bearing witness in many ways to the fact that He who had been buried there had risen.

9. The angel who announced the Good News was surely Gabriel himself. For when he who had originally said to her, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God" (Luke 1:30), saw her hastening to the tomb, he made speed now to come down and greet the Ever-Virgin once more with the same words, to announce the Good News that He who had been born of her without seed had risen from the dead, to take away the stone, and to show the empty tomb and the graveclothes as confirmation to her of his tidings. "And the angel", it says, "answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: do ye seek Jesus, which was crucified? He is risen. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:5–6). "Even though", he says, "you see the keepers

struck down with fear, you are not to be afraid. I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is risen, He is not here. Not only can He not be held by the locks, bars and seals of Hades, death and the tomb, but He is also Lord of us, the immortal, heavenly angels, and He alone is Lord of all." "Come, see", he says, "the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead" (Matt. 28:6–7).

10. "And they departed", it says, "with fear and great joy" (Matt. 28:8). Once more it seems to me that it was Mary Magdalene and the other women who had gathered with them by this time who still felt fear. For they had not understood the force of the angel's words, nor could they fully perceive the light so as to see and discover exactly what had happened. It was the Mother of God, on the other hand, who was possessed of great joy, because she understood what the angel said and was completely filled with light, being utterly purified and full of divine grace. Therefore she knew the truth for sure and believed the archangel, since his trustworthiness had long since been demonstrated to her through works. As the divinely wise Virgin was present when these things happened, how could she fail to understand what had been accomplished? She saw an earthquake, and a great one at that, an angel descending from heaven, flashing forth as lightning, she saw the keepers being struck down as dead, and the stone being moved, and the tomb empty. She also saw the great miracle of the graveclothes, which had not been undone and were held together with myrrh and aloes, but were visibly empty of the body. In addition to all this, there was the angel's joyful appearance and message to her. But when they had departed after these good tidings, it was as if Mary Magdalene had not heard the angel, or perhaps his greeting was not for her, since her only precise statement was that the sepulchre was empty, and she made no mention of the graveclothes. "Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple", as John tells us (John 20:2).

11. The Virgin Mother of God, on the other hand, returned in the company of other women to the place whence she had come. And behold, as Matthew says, "Jesus met them, saying, All hail". Notice that the Mother of God saw Him who for our salvation suffered in the flesh, was buried and rose again, even before Mary Magdalene. "And they came", it says, "and held him by the feet and worshipped him" (Matt. 28:9). When the Theotokos, together with Mary Magdalene,

heard the Good News of the resurrection from the angel, only she understood the meaning of the words. In the same way now when, in the company of the other women, she met her Son and God, she was the first of them all to see and recognize the risen Lord, and falling down before Him she grasped His feet and became His apostle to the apostles. It is from John that we learn that Mary Magdalene was not with the Mother of God at the time when the Lord met her as she was returning from the tomb, appeared to her and addressed her. For John says that Mary Magdalene "runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him" (John 20:2). If He had met her and she had seen Him, touched Him with her hands and heard Him speak, how could she have said, as she did, that they had taken Him away and laid Him in an unknown place? But after Peter and John had run to the tomb and seen the linen cloths, and gone away, "Mary", it says, "stood without at the sepulchre weeping" (John 20:11).

12. Observe that not only had she yet to hear Him, but she also had yet to hear the news. When the angels appeared and asked her, "Woman, why weepest thou", again, she replied as if speaking about a corpse (John 20:13). Even when she turned round and saw the Lord, she still did not understand, but when He too asked why she was weeping she gave the same reply, until He called her by name and proved it was He. Then she too fell down before Him and tried to embrace His feet in greeting, but heard Him say, "Touch me not" (John 20:15–17). From this we learn that when the Lord appeared earlier to His Mother and the women with her, it was only His Mother whom He allowed to touch His feet, even though Matthew attributes this action to the other women too, being unwilling to put forward the Lord's Mother as a witness to such events for the reason we stated in the beginning.

13. The Ever-Virgin was the first to come to the tomb and receive the good tidings of the resurrection, but afterwards many women came together and thy too saw the stone rolled away and heard the angels. Then after seeing and hearing, they separated. Some, as Mark tells us, "fled from the sepulchre, for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man, for they were afraid" (Mark 16:8). Others followed the Lord's Mother, and these it was who had the good fortune to see the Master and be addressed by Him. Mary Magdalene, on the other hand, went to tell Peter and John, and returned with them to the

tomb on her own. When they left she stayed, and she too was accounted worthy to see the Master, and was sent to the apostles. Once more she came to them to tell them all, as John says, "that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her" (John 20:18). Mark tells us that the Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene early in the morning (*cf.* Mark 16:9), which means when full daylight had come, obviously after dawn had passed, but he does not state that the Lord's resurrection happened then or that it was the first time He had appeared.

14. So now we have a thorough explanation of everything that concerns the myrrhbearers, and, as we have sought all along, agreement between the four evangelists on this subject. On the very day of the resurrection the apostles heard from the myrrhbearers, from Peter (Luke 24:34), and from Luke and Cleopas (Mark 16:12–13, *cf.* Luke 24:13–35), that the Lord was alive and had appeared to them, but they did not believe. That is why they were reproached by Him when He appeared to them later when they were gathered together (Mark 16:14). However, once He had shown Himself in many ways and on many occasions to be alive, not only did they all believe, but they preached everywhere: "Their sound is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Ps. 19:6 Lxx, Rom. 10:18), "The Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). For signs were absolutely necessary until the word had been preached throughout the world. But if there had to be great signs to prove and confirm that the teaching was true, there had also to be signs, though not great ones, to show whether those who had received the word really believed. What signs do I mean? The witness of their deeds. "Show me", it says, "thy faith by thy works" (*cf.* Jas. 2:18), and, "Who is faithful? By his good life let him show his works" (*cf.* Jas. 3:13). How can we believe that someone has a truly divine, great, exalted, even heavenly understanding, such as godliness entails, if he clings to sordid actions and is engrossed in the earth and its concerns?

15. It is pointless for someone to say that he has faith in God if he does not have the works which go with faith. What benefit were their lamps to the foolish virgins who had no oil (Matt. 25:1–13), namely, deeds of love and compassion? What good did calling Abraham his father do to that rich man frying in the unquenchable flame for his pitilessness towards Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31)? What use was his apparent obedience to the invitation to that man who had failed to acquire through good works a garment fitting for the divine

wedding and the bridechamber of immortality? He was invited and approached because he clearly believed, and he sat down alongside those holy guests, but when he was convicted and put to shame for being clothed in depraved habits and deeds, he was mercilessly bound hand and foot, and cast into hellfire, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 22:11–14).

16. May no one called by Christ have this experience, but may we all display a way of life which goes with our faith, that we may enter the bridechamber of unfading joy and spend eternity with the saints in the dwelling place of all those who rejoice. Amen.

HOMILY NINETEEN

On the Gospel About the Samaritan Woman[269]

AND THAT WE MUST DESPISE THE THINGS OF THE PRESENT

THROUGHOUT THIS CURRENT SEASON of fifty days[270] we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ from the dead, proving by the length of this feast its superiority over the others. For if these fifty days also include the yearly commemoration of the ascension into heaven,[271] it too shows the distinction between the risen Master and those of His servants who have from time to time been brought back to life. All who were raised from the dead were raised by other people, and when they died again, returned to the earth. But when Christ rose from the dead, death no longer had any power over Him (Rom. 6:9). He alone resurrected Himself on the third day and, instead of returning again to the earth, He ascended into heaven, making our human substance share the same throne as the Father, being equally divine.[272] He alone became the beginning of the coming resurrection of all (Col. 1:18), the firstfruits of them that slept (1 Cor. 15:20), the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18), and the Father of the world to come (Isa. 9:6 LXX). "As in Adam all", sinners and the just, "die, so in Christ shall all", both sinners and the just, "be made alive.[273] But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power and put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:22–26), at the time of the General Resurrection, "at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15:52). "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53).

2. The Lord's resurrection has procured this bounty for us, and that is why it is the only feast we keep for so many days, seeing that it is immortal, indestructible and eternal, and thus prefigures the future blessedness of the saints, whence pain, sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isa. 35:10 LXX). In that place inspired, unchanging joy and celebration will be unceasing, for it is the dwelling place of those who truly rejoice. For this reason the grace of the Spirit ordained that before this present season we should pass the holy forty days in fasting, vigil, prayer and all kinds of training in the virtues. Through those forty days He shows that in this world the life of those who are being saved consists only of repentance and a way of life pleasing to God. By means of these fifty days through which we are now passing, however, He demonstrates the ease and enjoyment which await those who have lived here and now in struggles for God's sake.

3. This is why Lent lasts for forty days and is closely linked with the commemoration of the Lord's saving passion, and fasting comes to an end after seven weeks. This season, on the other hand, is for fifty days, and includes the Lord's ascension from earth to heaven and the descent and distribution of the divine Spirit. This present age is divided into weeks of seven days, is made up of four seasons, four parts and four elements, and upon those who make themselves sharers in Christ's sufferings through their deeds here and now, it bestows the feast of Pentecost, which begins in the eighth week and ends in the eighth week, going beyond the honourable numbers seven and four.[274] This feast bears witness, through the Lord's resurrection and His subsequent ascension, to the future resurrection of the human race, when those who are worthy will be raised up in the clouds to meet the Lord, and thereafter shall be ever at rest with God (*cf.* 1 Thess. 4:17).

4. All this will come in due course. Meanwhile the Lord, before His passion and resurrection, was preaching the Good News of the kingdom and showing His disciples that those worthy of faith and of the eternal inheritance offered by Him would not be chosen just from among the Jews but from the Gentiles as well. "Then", according to the Gospel reading we have heard today (John 4:5–42), "cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there." He calls the well "a spring", because it was a source of running water, as

will become clear from what follows.[275] It was Jacob's well because he dug it. The place which Jacob gave Joseph was called Shechem. As he was breathing his last in Egypt and disposing of his property he said to Joseph, "Behold I die: but God will bring you again unto the land of your fathers. Moreover I have given to thee Shechem as a special portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow" (Gen. 48:21–22 Lxx). So Shechem was later inhabited by the tribe of Ephraim, Joseph's firstborn son,[276] and the Ten Tribes of Israel, ruled by the apostate Jeroboam, settled the surrounding area.[277]

5. Because they frequently offended against God and were often abandoned by Him, their whole nation was later enslaved, and the ruler of Assyria brought together various nations to live there instead of them, calling the settlers Samaritans after the Hill Somor.[278] History tells us that Jacob subdued Shechem as he passed by (Gen. 34:25–31), and in the same way Christ won over Samaria now as He journeyed through. Jacob, however, as he tells us himself, achieved this with his sword and his power, resulting in the annihilation and destruction of the former inhabitants, whereas Christ used His words and His teaching, and the outcome was their salvation. "Jesus therefore", it says, "being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour" (John 4:6).

6. The time of day, the effort required and the place would make anyone with a body like ours sit down. So, confirming that He had a human body, and foreseeing the good that would result from his action, "He sat", it says, "thus on the well". He simply sat down on His own like any other traveller, "For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat" (John 4:8). While he was sitting alone by the well, "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water" (John 4:7). As man, the Lord was thirsty, and saw that someone who was naturally thirsty was coming to quench her thirst. As God, however, He also saw that her heart was athirst for the water of salvation, although she did not know Him who could give it to her. So He hastened to reveal Himself to her longing soul for, as it is written, He Himself longs for those who long for Him (*cf.* Ps. 9:10, Prov. 7:15). He started from a point where He would be well received and said to her, "Give me water to drink" (John 4:7). Being intelligent, and understanding just from His clothes, His appearance and His outward behaviour that

He was a Jew who kept the law, she replied that she was amazed that He should ask a Samaritan woman for a drink, since the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans because they were Gentiles. Using this as a starting-point, the Lord began to disclose Himself by saying to her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me water to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (John 4:10).

7. It is evident that had she known who He was, she would have asked at once and would have partaken of the true living water, as later, once she had found out, she did to her benefit. The council of the Jews, by contrast, crucified the Lord of glory after they had questioned Him and clearly heard who He was (1 Cor. 2:8). But what is God's gift? For He said, "If thou knewest the gift of God" (John 4:10). If we ignore everything else, was it not a great gift and grace that God incarnate did not find abhorrent people whom the Jews loathed and with whom they would not share even a drink of water? But who can comprehend the fact that He held them so dear that He not only received what they gave Him, but shared with them His divine gifts of grace? (But why do I say gifts of grace? For He offered Himself and made believers acceptable vessels of His divinity, since there is no other way they could have within them a well of water springing up into eternal life, as He proclaimed with foresight.) Whose mind is capable of apprehending this? What words can express the excellence of this gift?

8. Since the Samaritan woman did not yet understand how great this living water was, she was puzzled initially as to how He who was addressing her could find the water He was promising, since He had nothing to draw with and the well was deep. Then she endeavoured to compare Him with Jacob, whom she referred to as their father, attributing honour to her nation on account of their place,[279] and praised the water from the well, as if no better could be found. When she heard the Lord saying that the water that he would give would become for the one who received it a well springing up into life, with a soul full of longing and on her way towards faith, though not yet able to look directly up at the light, she uttered the words, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw" (John 4:15). The Lord, who still wished to uncover His identity gradually, told her to call her husband. When the woman, concealing her circumstances and eager to receive the gift, said that she had no husband, she heard how many husbands she had had since her girlhood and was accused

of not now having a husband. However, she was not annoyed by this criticism, but realized immediately that the one speaking to her was a prophet, and turned to greater subjects.

9. Do you see how forbearing and keen to learn the woman was? "Our fathers", she said, "worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (John 4:20). Notice what occupies her thoughts, and how well she knows the Scriptures. How many believers nowadays, born and brought up in the Church, are ignorant of what the Samaritan woman knew, that our fathers, namely Jacob and his sons the patriarchs, worshipped God on that mountain (*cf.* Deut. 11:29; 27:12, Josh. 8:33)? Christ accepted her knowledge and her intelligent meditation on divinely inspired Scripture as sweet savour, and gladly continued His conversation with her. If you put something fragrant on to burning coals, you motivate those who approach to come back again and to stay near, but if instead you put on something with an unpleasant, oppressive smell, you repel them and drive them away. It is the same with the mind. If your attention is occupied with what is holy, you make yourself worthy of being visited by God, since this is the sweet savour which God catches scent of. On the other hand, if you nurture evil, foul and earthly thoughts within you, you remove yourself from God's supervision and unfortunately make yourself worthy of His aversion. "The lawless shall not stand in thy sight", says the psalmist and prophet of God (Ps. 5:5 LXX). Given that the law commands, "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God" (Deut. 8:18) at all times, "when thou sittest, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (*cf.* Deut. 6:7), while the Gospel says, "Search the scriptures" (John 5:39), and in them you will find eternal life, and the apostle exhorts us, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17), anyone who dwells on earthly thoughts is obviously lawless. And how much more so is someone absorbed in evil and filthy thoughts?

10. But when was it that our fathers worshipped God in this mountain? When the patriarch Jacob was fleeing from his envious brother Esau and, heeding the advice of his father Isaac, departed for Mesopotamia, and when he returned thence with his wives and children. On the return journey, after the incident concerning Dinah and the destruction of the Shechemites, when Jacob pitched his tents at about the place where the Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman, the Lord said to Jacob, as is written in Genesis, "Arise, go up to Bethel: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou

fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother" (Gen. 35:1). After these words, Jacob arose and went up to the nearby mountain and built there, it says, an altar, and named the place Bethel, since God appeared to him there (Gen. 35: 6–7). That is why the Samaritan woman said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain" (John 4:20), identifying herself with the forefathers. For all the ordinances concerning the Temple in Jerusalem came later. Since that place had been called God's house by Jacob, for that is what Bethel means, the Samaritan woman was puzzled, wanting to know why the Jews said that the house of God, where it was their custom to make sacrifice to God and worship Him, was in Jerusalem rather than Bethel. The Lord, already reaching the conclusion of His discourse and prophesying that the woman was to be the sort of person God sought and accepted, said in answer to her words, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father" (John 4:21). Then a little later He added, "For the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:23).

11. Do you see that He confirmed in regard to her that she would be such as God sought and that she would worship the heavenly Father not in any particular place, but according to the Gospel – for the words, "Ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father", were addressed to her – while at the same time openly announcing to her that the law would be altered? Because changing the place of worship by necessity also means changing the law.

12. The intervening passage, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22), is both a reply to her words and a continuation of His own discourse. "We the Jews", He said (for He counted Himself as one of them, being of their race according to the flesh), "those of us who are not unworthy to be called Jews, but who observe our religious duties, worship differently from you Samaritans, because we know that it is laid down that worship should be performed in Judaea for the reason that the salvation of the world, that is, the Christ, will come from the Jews". Since Christ was not to come in the future, but was He Himself, He did not say, "Salvation will be", but "Salvation *is* of the Jews" (John 4:22). "But the hour cometh", He went on, "and now is". In this too He was speaking prophetically. He said, "The hour cometh" because it was not yet accomplished but would be, whereas He added, "and now is", because He saw that she was about to believe

and worship in spirit and in truth. "But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). The heavenly Father whom we worship is the Father of the Truth, namely, of the only-begotten Son, and has the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, and those who worship Him in these Two do so because they believe in these persons and act through Them. For the apostle tells us that it is through the Spirit that we worship and pray (*cf.* Rom. 8:26), and God's only-begotten Son says, "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

13. The true worshippers are those who worship the heavenly Father in spirit and in truth. He had rejected both Jerusalem and Samaria, and lest anyone should think that He was going to substitute some other place, He went on once more to lead His listener away from any physical concept of place and worship by saying, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), meaning that He who has no body is entirely outside everything physical. For in this way the worshippers shall truly see Him everywhere in His Spirit and His Truth. As God is a Spirit He has no body, and being without a body He is not in any one place or circumscribed by spatial boundaries. Accordingly, anyone who says that God must be worshipped only within the confines of Jerusalem, or the mountain of Samaria, or anywhere else at all on earth or in heaven is not speaking or worshipping truly. Being bodiless, God is nowhere, but as God He is everywhere. If there were a mountain, a place or any part of creation where God was not, then He would be found to be in some way circumscribed. So He is everywhere and in everything. In what way is this so? Is He contained not by each part but by the whole? No, because then that would be a body. He embraces and encompasses everything, and is in Himself everywhere and also above everything, worshipped by true worshippers in His Spirit and His Truth.[280]

14. Everywhere, not just on earth but above the earth, God will be worshipped by those whose faith is true and worthy of Him, as the incorporeal Father who is invisible in time and space, in the holy, pre-eternal Spirit, and in the Son and Word who together with the Father is without beginning, and who is the Father's Truth in His very person.[281] Souls and angels too are bodiless and are not in any one place, but they are not everywhere.[282] They do not encompass everything, but themselves need the all-encompassing God, and are in Him

who embraces and contains all things, with their limits suitably set by Him. However, the soul does encompass the body with which it was created, and is everywhere within it, not in spatial terms nor as being contained by the body, but as enclosing and containing it, since it is in God's image in this respect as well.[283]

15. When the Samaritan woman heard these extraordinary and divine words from Christ, that God can not be truly worshipped anywhere, except in His Spirit and His Truth, she, like the soul betrothed to God in the Song of Songs, was stirred up by the voice of the immortal bridegroom and made mention of Him for whom she waited and longed, and whose presence was still concealed (S. of S. 2:8). "I know", she said, "that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things" (John 4:25). Do you see how ready she was to believe that the awaited one was already at hand, and how hopeful she was? Surely David's words apply also to her, "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready: I will sing and give praise in my glory" (Ps. 57:7 LXX).

16. How could she have known this with such certainty or had such a disposition in her soul, had she not studied the prophetic books with the utmost understanding?[284] This is why she had her mind on such high matters, filled with divine inspiration. When I look with admiration at this Samaritan woman's great spiritual longing for Christ, it occurs to me to apply to her once more words from that song, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, chosen as the sun" (S. of S. 6:10 LXX). For when she proclaimed that soon Christ, the spiritual Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2), would appear, and brought to light the fact that the Church of the Gentiles would begin through her,[285] I see her as though she were emerging from the baptismal font of the well[286] where she was standing, having been instructed by Christ, looking forth as the much-loved morning. She was fair as the noon, because she gave light even though the night of ungodliness still reigned. She was chosen as the sun since she was given the name Photini[287] by the Saviour and was enrolled in the list of those who were to shine forth as the sun, according to the Gospel (Matt. 13:43), since she was to set the seal of a blessed martyr's death on her subsequent radiant life. Even now she recognized Christ as true God and proclaimed Him with perfect theology. That which He later told His disciples about the Spirit who shared His own divine nature and honour, that, when He comes, He would teach all the

truth (*cf.* John 16:13), she anticipated by saying of Christ, "When he is come, he will tell us all things" (John 4:25).

17. When Christ the spiritual bridegroom saw what she was like, He said to her, "I that speak unto thee am he."[288] She immediately became a chosen bearer of the Good Tidings, left her waterpot, ran to the city, drew everyone's attention with her words, and led them towards faith in Him whom she had seen, saying, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29). She did not speak in this way because she harboured any doubts, but because she believed that others too would find fuller assurance by seeing the Lord and would be more easily convinced by speaking to Him, as in fact happened.

18. I have dealt very briefly with the subject so far, and I shall now pass over the rest of the Gospel passage, for I see that time is pressing you to attend to physical needs and the business of daily life. But think about this Samaritan woman. As soon as she heard the words of the Gospel, which we too proclaim to your charity, she immediately despised her body's necessities. Straightaway she left her water pot and her house, ran to the city and, having persuaded the Samaritans, returned with them to Christ. The words, "Come, see", actually mean, "Follow me and I shall lead you and show you now the Saviour who has come into the world."

19. At that time she urged people in this manner and brought them to Christ. However, by abandoning her water pot and her house, she teaches us to value the benefit of the Lord's teaching more highly even than absolute necessities. The Lord too referred to His teaching as the "good part" when He spoke to Martha in defence of Mary, who was listening to His word (Luke 10:42). If we have to despise necessary things, how much more must we hold unnecessary things in contempt? What forces you away from listening to words beneficial to your soul? Your care for your home, your children or your wife? Your own or your family's grief or joy? Buying or selling property? The use, or rather misuse, of your possessions? But listen intelligently to the apostolic teaching, "Brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives behave as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. 7:29–31).

20. What does it mean that "the time is short"? Life is brief, death is near, this world is passing away, and there is another one that lasts for ever. The things that convey us with certainty into that world are: despising this present world, preparing for the one to come, as far as possible living here according to the order of that world, and fleeing as far as we can from what is harmful in this present life. When enemies make frequent attacks on the lands outside our city, it is as if we did not possess our own fields, and most of the time we abandon them and sit safely inside. Then when the enemies temporarily withdraw, for a little while we make use of the paths in front of the town, without misusing them, for we see that time is short. In the same way, the apostle rightly exhorts us to use this world but not abuse it, for he sees our invisible enemies' harmful influence and our imminent destruction. "For the fashion of this world", he says, "passeth away". The things of the present have no actual existence but are, as it were, just outward forms, which come to pass but have no real being, as they are short-lived, fleeting phenomena. Anyone who wants to possess them will never be able to, for they are like the shadow of a waterless summer cloud scudding by, driven along by the wind. So the aim of the apostle's counsel is to reveal the intention of each one of us and to give a token whereby we can recognize teaching that comes from God. As I have said already, even if someone wishes to possess the things of the present, they are impossible to acquire, for two reasons. Not only is this world passing away, but so is each one of us who uses this world, and sometimes we depart before our worldly possessions pass away. Everyone passes through life along a road which is affected by many different factors and which will leave him. One of two things happens. Either the road reaches its end before he does and he can no longer keep what he has acquired, or else he reaches his final end before this road of life, and can no longer hold on to any of this life's goods. Man is mortal, and he is bound up with the concerns of this life, which are themselves subject to change. Anyone united with what is changeable either suffers all manner of reverses and loses what he has, such as riches, splendour and pleasure, or else he dies and brings upon himself the greatest change of all, departing naked and abandoning all the goods of this present life and his hopes for them. He may leave them to his children, but what joy does that bring him? He is no longer aware of what happens here, and his children, too, fall in one way or the other.

21. The end of those who are devoted to this world is always misfortune, since they are eventually carried away naked, leaving everything they loved here. By contrast, for those who despise this world's goods and seek to learn about the world to come and hasten to do what serves to attain it, death does not inflict loss when it comes, but rather it conveys them away from what is vain and unstable to the day without evening, undying life, inexhaustible riches, unfading joy, eternal glory, and things that truly exist and remain for ever unchanged.

22. May we all attain to this, by the grace and love for mankind of Him who bowed the heavens and came down for our sake, not just down as far as us but as far as the souls shut up in the depths. He quickly came up from that place by His resurrection and the restoration of all things to life, and bestowed on us through Himself enlightenment, knowledge, and the hope of heavenly, eternal things, in which He is glorified unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY TWENTY

ON THE EIGHTH MATINS GOSPEL OF JOHN THE EVANGELIST[289]

BEING THE APPEARANCE OF JESUS TO MARY MAGDALENE IN WHICH IT IS STATED THAT THOSE WHO PIOUSLY STAY TO THE END OF THE DIVINE SERVICES WILL BE WORTHY OF GREAT GIFTS

ONLY JOHN THE VIRGIN ACQUIRED as his mother by grace the only Virgin among mothers (John 19:27). He was especially beloved of Christ, and, more than the other evangelists, he was called the son of that thunder with which the Lord went up to heaven and thundered (*cf.* Mark 3:17). Therefore he preached more loudly to make absolutely clear to us everything about the Master's resurrection from the dead and to relate how He appeared after His resurrection. Last Sunday[290] in church we heard Him saying through the Gospel he wrote, "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved", meaning John himself (John 20:1–2).

2. Now we have heard him saying, "But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping" (John 20:11). When John, together with Peter, listened to Mary and ran to the tomb where life began,[291] they saw what they saw, believed because of the signs, and went away astonished to their own homes. Mary, on the other hand, remained standing outside the tomb and weeping. This proves that she had not yet received any assurance of the Master's resurrection, even though

she had come twice to the tomb with different people. The first time was with the Mother of God, as Matthew relates, writing, "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And behold, there was a great earthquake", and so on (Matt. 28:1ff).[292] Then she came with Peter and John, who went away marvelling, having believed because of what they saw. So she had come twice to the tomb with others, and whereas all her companions had believed and been given assurance, she was crying inconsolably because she had received no assurance at all.

3. We can see the same happening with regard to virtuous struggles. Grace comes immediately to meet some of those who strive, giving them assurance of the earnest of their inheritance (*cf.* Eph. 1:14), letting them taste the promised prizes, as if stretching out a loving hand to welcome them and anointing them for further struggles.[293] With others, however, grace waits for the end of the struggle, and prepares for them the crown of patience as well. As one of the God-bearing Fathers says, "Some receive holy rewards before their labours, some during labours, and some when they depart."[294]

4. This happens because the wise providence of God orders our affairs in many different ways and lovingly bestows on each one of us what is appropriate and profitable both for virtuous deeds and the mysteries of faith. Arranging matters for Mary Magdalene in His love and wisdom, the Master deemed it right that she should not yet at that point have received assurance of His resurrection, leading and encouraging future generations in the direction of patience through her example. Let us hear what she was afterwards accounted worthy of because she persevered and continued to wait by the tomb. "As she wept", it says, "she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain" (John 20:11–12).

5. That she bent down and turned her eyes with longing to the tomb was the result of her excellent disposition. Firstly we must consider that, although it was still dark, as the evangelist said earlier (John 20:1), she clearly distinguished, even from outside, everything and everyone inside the cave. This shows that even though it was still dark outside, since the full light of day, as visible to our eyes, had not yet come, that cave was full of the light of the resurrection. Mary saw this light with God's help, and it increased her longing for Christ even

more, and enabled her eyes to perceive a vision of angels. Not only did she see them but she was also able to speak with them. Such was that light.

6. She saw them arrayed in white, not just because of the purity and brilliance of their angelic nature, but because they were illuminating and clarifying the mystery of the resurrection, while at the same time actually celebrating with us the truly radiant day of the Master's resurrection. They were sitting down so that she would realize that they had not just come, but had been there before, even though previously they had not been visible. In this way she would understand their rank as she considered who these who had been invisibly present could be. I think it was the desire to be as near as possible to the place where the Master's body had lain that made them sit down. As if they were clinging lovingly to the tomb, they were sitting one at the head and the other at the feet, showing that Christ's divinity, as symbolized by the place where His head lay, was equally beloved and precious to the angels as His incarnation, represented by the place of His feet. "And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?" (John 20:13).

7. "You see that the cave has become heaven, or rather a heavenly temple, instead of an earthly tomb and a prison. Instead of human guards it is full of heavenly angels who magnify it exceedingly as the place of the life-giving God, and joyfully tend it now that it is empty. But woman, why are you weeping?" They did not ask because they were unaware of what was the matter with her, but to alleviate her grief, make her the mistress of her thoughts and find an opportunity to accomplish their own work. The task of the angels sitting by the tomb of the giver of life was to proclaim the glory of the risen Lord. But when she was asked by the angels, she replied, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back" (John 20:13–14). What made Mary suddenly turn around? Obviously that the angels bowed like servants to the Lord as He appeared and paid heed to Him. Mary called Him just "my" Lord, and suspected that His body had been stolen and taken away, showing that her soul was inclined towards Him, but she did not think of Him in a way worthy of God.[295] They, by contrast, proved by their actions that He was Lord even of God's angels. Before He arrived they were sitting beside the tomb, but when the Master suddenly appeared opposite

them, they immediately arose and earnestly turned their attention to Him with piety and admiration, in the manner of servants.

8. When Mary turned round to see what had amazed the angels just by appearing, she "saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus" (John 20:14), not having heard yet about the resurrection and finding it difficult to accept. Since the daylight outside was still dim and the Lord did not yet reveal to her His divine radiance that He might be recognized as He who had suffered, Mary did not know who He was, but thought that the Husbandman of our souls, the Creator of all, was the gardener for the plants in that place. When He made Himself known by calling her by name, "Mary", she changed her mind and replied, "Rabboni", which means, Teacher. Though she saw Him alive, no thought of His divinity occurred to her, and she regarded Him simply as a man of God and a teacher. She was inspired by love not just to fall down before Him but to lay hold of His feet, and heard the words, "Touch me not" (John 20:17). "Since", He said, "your mind has not grasped the height of the mystery concerning me, that, being God, I am appearing now for your sake in a body which is now Godlike, do not touch me."[296]

9. The honour of being the only woman after the resurrection to touch the body of Him who for our sake was made man of her, had to be reserved for the Mother of God, and Matthew relates how this happened. He says of her that she came and held Him by the feet (*cf.* Matt. 28:9),[297] whereas the Lord said to Mary Magdalene, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father". These words are closely linked with the words He subsequently spoke to His disciples, "I ascend unto my Father", "for I am not yet ascended" (John 20:17). He said this to make them concerned and more earnest, and to stir them up to long and seek to see Him. This applies to Mary Magdalene too for He says, "Touch me not, for this body in which I am now clothed surpasses fire in its upward haste and power,[298] and can not only ascend to heaven, but to the Father above the heavens. However I have not yet ascended to my Father", because He had not yet shown Himself to His disciples after rising from the dead.

10. "Go to those brethren of mine, for we all come from the one Father, although not in the same way. I am His true Son, of one nature with Him, whereas they have been made sons of His through Me." "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). He is

our Father by grace through the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15), but His Father by nature on account of His divinity. Similarly, He is our God as the Creator of our human nature, but His God by reason of the dispensation whereby He became man. He made these distinctions so that we might understand the difference. By this message, that He was ascending to the Father, He led them to understand that His body was such that it could go about on earth for ever as it had before, and be with them always.

11. Mary Magdalene, whom we extol in hymns as one of Christ's myrrhbearers, into whom, once the seven evil spirits had been cast out by Christ (Mark 16:9), the sevenfold operation of the Spirit's grace clearly entered (*cf.* Isa. 11:2–3 LXX),[299] was counted worthy to see and talk to angels, because she continued to stand by the tomb. She saw the Lord Himself and became His apostle to the apostles.[300] Having been taught by His divine mouth and having finally found full assurance, she went to the apostles and told them, "that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her" (John 20:18).

12. Let us consider, brethren, how far Mary Magdalene was from the dignity of Peter, the leader of the apostles, and John, Christ's beloved theologian, and yet at that time she was counted worthy to experience much greater things than they did. When they ran to the tomb, they saw only the linen cloths and the napkin, whereas she, by reason of the determined and patient endurance with which she remained to the end standing at the door of the cave, saw not just the angels but also the Lord of the angels risen from the dead in the flesh, before the apostles saw Him. She heard Him with her own ears and became a minister of the commandments from His divine mouth.

13. This temple[301] is a figure of that cave. Or rather, it is more than a figure, being almost another such cave, for it has a place where the Master's body is laid, the area within the veil and the most holy table there. Anyone who is determined to hasten to that truly divine cave that holds God, stand there and remain to the end, gathering his thoughts and lifting them up to God, will not only recognize the words of divinely inspired Scripture proclaiming, like angels, the divinity and humanity of the Word made man for our sake,[302] he will also certainly see the Lord with the eyes of his mind and, we can say without exaggeration, his bodily eyes. For if anyone looks with faith at the mystical table and the bread of life placed upon it, he sees the person of the Word of God, who was made flesh for our sake and dwelt

among us (John 1:14). If he shows himself a worthy receptacle, he will not only see but become a partaker of Him, receive Him to dwell within him, and be filled with His divine grace. Just as Mary saw what the apostles at that time longed to see, so he is accounted worthy to see and enjoy things that the angels, according to the apostle, desire to look into (1 Pet. 1:12), and by contemplating them and sharing in them, he is rendered completely Godlike.

14. Wherefore, brethren, lift up towards virtue the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, walking in the Lord's straight roads of righteousness, chastity, love, humility and truth (*cf.* Heb. 12:12–14). Hatred, falsehood, deception, envy, acquisitiveness, pride and their like are, by contrast, distorted, winding roads. Even if someone does not do these things but just loves them and thinks about them with his mind, they make him worthy of God's aversion. For whereas man regards the outward person, God looks at the heart, and He it is who searches hearts and thoughts (*cf.* Rev. 2:23).

15. While we are gathered together in Christ's Temple, "Gird up the loins of your mind", as Peter, the chief apostle, says, "be sober to the end, and hope for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13). It is impossible for anyone who stands in God's holy Church collecting his thoughts, lifting His mind to God, occupying his understanding with the sacred singing from the beginning until the end and waiting patiently, not to undergo a divine change, in accordance with his attention to God and His teachings. Through this attention a certain warmth is born in the heart which chases away evil thoughts like flies, creates spiritual peace and comfort in the soul and bestows sanctification on the body, according to him who said, "My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned" (Ps. 39:3).[303] One of the God-bearing Fathers also taught us this, saying, "Strive as hard as you can to ensure that your inner labour is according to God's will, and you will conquer the outward passions".[304] The great Paul, too, urged us towards this, saying, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

16. Somewhere else Paul exhorts us, "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth" (Eph. 6:14). When our thoughts revolve around divine subjects and abide in God's truth, holding back and taking care of the desiring part of the soul[305] and driving away the body's desires, carnal thoughts leave us. Then the grace of the Spirit

takes possession of the quiet soul, and gives it a taste of the unspeakable good things to come, which no passionate and negligent eye has seen, nor ear hear, neither have entered into the heart of such a man (*cf.* 1 Cor. 2:9). This taste is the earnest of these good things, and the heart which accepts these pledges becomes spiritual and receives assurance of its salvation. So anyone who wishes to gain this assurance and understand exactly about these spiritual pledges should conduct himself as today's words have guided and taught him. In this way he will become a fellow citizen with God's saints and share in the eternal unspeakable good things promised to them.

17. To which may we all attain by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory, might, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY TWENTY-ONE

On the Ascension of Our Lord and God And Saviour Jesus Christ

ALSO DESCRIBING HOW THE SABBATH AS LAID DOWN IN THE LAW IS FULFILLED[306]

THE JEWS KEPT THE FEAST of the Passover,[307] the crossing from Egypt to the land of Palestine, as laid down in their law, and we have celebrated the gospel Pascha, the passage of our human nature in Christ from death to life (*cf.* John 5:24, 1 John 3:14), from corruption to incorruption (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:42, 50). What words can express the superiority of this celebration over the solemnities of the old law and the events commemorated on its holy days? No one can adequately state how much more excellent it is. The enhypostatic Wisdom[308] of the most high Father, God's pre-eternal Word who is beyond all being, who was united with us in His love for mankind and lived among us (*cf.* John 1:14),[309] has now revealed through His actions a cause for celebration even more distinctly superior than Easter's excellence. For we now celebrate the transition of our nature in Him, not just from the subterranean regions up on to the earth, but from the earth to the heaven of heavens, and to the throne above the heavens of Him who rules over all.

2. Today[310] the Lord not only stood with His disciples after His resurrection, but was also parted from them and was taken up into heaven as they watched (Acts 1:9–11), ascended and entered into the true Holy of Holies and sat down on the right hand of the Father, far above all principality and power and every name and honour that is known and named, either in this world, or in that which is to come

(*cf.* Eph. 1:20–21). There were many resurrections before Christ's resurrection, and similarly, there were many ascensions before His ascension. The Spirit lifted up Jeremiah the prophet,[311] and an angel took up Habakkuk (Bel & Dr. 33–39 Lxx). In particular it is written that Elijah went up with a chariot of fire (2 Kgs. 2:11). But even he did not go beyond the realms of earth, and the ascension of each of those mentioned was just a sort of movement lifting them up from the ground without taking them out of the area surrounding the earth.[312] Similarly, the others who were resurrected all died and returned to the earth. By contrast, Christ has risen and death no longer has dominion over Him (*cf.* Rom. 6:9), and now He has ascended and sat down on high, every height is below Him and bears witness that He is God over all (Rom. 9:5).

3. The Master's body is the visible mountain of which Isaiah speaks, the Lord's house above the tops of all the mountains of reason (*cf.* Isa. 2:2 Lxx). Neither an angel nor a man, but the incarnate Lord Himself came and saved us, being made like us for our sake while remaining unchanged as God. In the same way as He came down, without changing place but condescending to us, so He returns once more, without moving as God, but enthroning on high our human nature which He had assumed. It was truly right that the first begotten human nature from the dead (Rev. 1:5) should be presented there to God, as firstfruits from the first crop offered for the whole race of men.

4. Although many resurrections and ascensions have taken place, we celebrate none of them as we do the Lord's resurrection and ascension, because we neither have nor ever shall have any share in those others. All we gained from them was to be led towards faith in our Saviour's resurrection and ascension, in which we all share now and in the future. His resurrection and ascension are the resurrection and ascension of our human nature; and not just of our human nature, but of everyone who believes in Christ and shows his faith in works (*cf.* Jas. 2:18).[313] Christ was unbegotten and uncreated according to His divinity, and it was for our sake that He became man. He lived as He did because of us, teaching us the path that leads back to true life. Everything He suffered in the flesh He suffered for us to heal our passions. On account of our sins He was led to death, and for us He rose and ascended, preparing our own resurrection and ascension for unending eternity. For all the heirs of everlasting life follow as far as possible the pattern of His saving work on earth.[314]

5. We start this imitation of Christ with holy baptism, which symbolizes the Lord's burial and resurrection. Virtuous living and conduct in accord with the gospel are its intermediate stage, and its perfection is victory through spiritual struggles against the passions, which procures painless, indestructible, heavenly life.[315] As the apostle tells us: "If ye live in the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (*cf.* Rom. 8:13). Those who live according to Christ imitate what He did in the flesh. Just as He died physically, so in time everyone dies,[316] but we shall also rise again in the flesh as He did, glorified and immortal, not now but in due course, when we shall also ascend, as Paul says: for "we shall be caught up", he says, "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).

6. Do you see that any of us who wishes will share in the Lord's resurrection, and will be an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ (*cf.* Rom. 8:17)? That is why we joyfully celebrate the resurrection of our human nature, its exaltation and sitting down[317] on high, and also the starting point of the resurrection and ascension of each of the faithful, publicly proclaiming the words of today's Gospel reading, that when the Lord had risen, He stood in the midst of His disciples (Luke 24:36–53).

7. Why did He stand in their midst and afterwards accompany them? "And he led them out", it says, "as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them" (Luke 24:50). He did it to show that He was completely whole and unharmed, to prove that His feet, that had endured being pierced by nails, were sound and trod firmly, that His hands, that had been likewise nailed to the Cross, and His side, that had been pierced by the spear, were whole, even though they bore the signs of the wounds as confirmation of the saving passion.[318] I think that the words, "He stood in the midst of his disciples" (*cf.* Luke 24:36), also imply that their faith in Him was strengthened by the way He appeared and blessed them. He did not just stand among them all, but stood in the midst of each one's heart and it was strengthened through faith, so that the psalmist's words, "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved" (Ps. 46:5), can be applied to each of their hearts. For from then on the Lord's apostles became steadfast and immovable.

8. So He stood in the midst of them and said: "Peace be unto you" (Luke 24:36), that sweet, penetrating and familiar salutation. There are two kinds of peace: peace with God, which is above all the fruits of

godliness, and peace with one another, which arises naturally from the words of the Gospel. At that time the Lord gave them both by His one greeting. When He first sent them out He told them, "Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house" (Luke 10:5). Now He did exactly that, and entering the house where they were gathered, He straightway gave them peace. He saw that they were frightened and troubled by the unexpected and strange sight – "and supposed", it says, "that they had seen a spirit" (Luke 24:37), that is, that the person they saw was a phantom. So once more He told them what was happening in their own hearts, revealed that He was the one to whom they had said before the passion and resurrection, "Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee" (John 16:30), and proposed that they reassure themselves by examining and touching Him. Once He saw that they had accepted the truth, He gave further confirmation for them to scrutinize by taking food while they watched, as well as sharing fellowship and peace with them. "And while they yet believed not and wondered", certainly not because they dissented, but for joy, "he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat it before them" (Luke 24:41–43).

9. That incorruptible body was fed after the resurrection, not because it needed food, but to prove it had risen and to demonstrate that it was the same one as had eaten with them before the passion. It did not, however, consume the food in the way that mortal bodies do, but by divine energy, as, so to speak, fire dissolves wax, except that fire has to have fuel to sustain it, whereas immortal bodies do not need food for sustenance.

10. The piece of baked fish and the honeycomb which He ate were also symbols of Christ's mystery. The Word of God united Himself hypostatically with our human nature, which was like a fish swimming in the water of pleasure-loving, passionate life. By the unapproachable divine fire of His Godhead He cleansed this nature of every tendency towards passion, and made it equal to God, and, as it were, red hot. The Lord came to send fire upon the earth (*cf.* Luke 12:49), and through participation in this fire He makes divine not just the human substance which He assumed for our sake, but every person who is found worthy of communion with Him.[319] On the other hand, human nature is like honeycomb because we hold the treasure of reason in our bodies, just as honey is contained in the comb. This is especially true of anyone who

believes in Christ, for he has the grace of the divine Spirit stored up in his soul and body like honey in wax. The Lord ate these things because he was pleased to take the salvation of each human being as His food. He did not, however, eat it all, but just a piece of a honeycomb, that is, a part of it, for not everyone believed. Nor did He take this portion Himself, but it was given Him by His disciples, for the disciples set before Him just the believers, separating them from the faithless.

11. By eating the fish and the honeycomb in front of His disciples in this way and for these reasons, He reminded them of the words He spoke to them previously when He was approaching His passion, thus proving that He was truthful. What He had foretold was fulfilled, and He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures and know that thus it behoved God's only-begotten Son to be made man for men's sake on account of the unfathomable ocean of His love, to be manifested and witnessed to by the Father's voice from above and the appearance of the divine Spirit (*cf.* Luke 3:22). It was fitting that He be proved worthy of trust and admiration by extraordinary acts and words, and also that He be envied and betrayed by people who did not seek God's glory but honour from men, that He should be crucified, buried and rise on the third day from the dead. Repentance and the remission of sins had to be preached in His name, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). Those who saw Him with their own eyes and served Him were to become messengers and witnesses of these events. He proclaimed that He would send them from above the promise of His Father, the Holy Spirit, and He ordered them to stay in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49).

12. As He spoke in this way to His disciples of matters pertaining to salvation, He led them out of the house and as far as Bethany, and when He had blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up to heaven (Luke 24:50–51). With a radiant cloud for a chariot, He ascended in glory (*cf.* Acts 1:9), entered the Holy of Holies not made by hands and sat down on the right hand of the heavenly majesty, making our human substance share His own throne and divinity. As the apostles continued looking steadfastly towards heaven, they learnt authoritatively from angels that He would come again from heaven in the same way with everyone watching (Acts 1:10). The Lord Himself foretold this, and earlier Daniel had seen it. "I saw", he said, "and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven"

(Dan. 7:13). The Lord Himself said, "All the tribes of the earth shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven" (*cf.* Matt. 24:30).

13. The disciples worshipped the most high Lord who had come down from above the heavens, made the earth into heaven and gone up again whence He came, having united things below with things above and formed one Church, at the same time heavenly and earthly, to the glory of His love for mankind. Then they returned with joy from the Mount of Olives, whence the Master had ascended, to Jerusalem and were continuously in the Temple with their minds set on heaven, praising and blessing God (Luke 24:53), and preparing themselves to receive the promised coming of the divine Spirit.

14. Briefly put, brethren, that is how those called by Christ's name should order their lives. They should persevere in prayers and supplications and, in imitation of the angels, have their eyes lifted up to the Master above the heavens, praising and blessing Him with irreproachable conduct, and waiting for His mystical coming. As the psalmist says to Him, "I will sing and will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me?" (Ps. 101:2). Paul demonstrated this too by saying, "For our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20), "whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus" (Heb. 6:20). Peter, the chief apostle, also guides us in this direction: "Gird up the loins of your mind", he says, "be perfectly sober, and hope for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 13:8), "whom having not seen, ye love" (1 Pet. 1:8). The Lord too hinted at the same with His words, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return" (Luke 12:35–36). In this way He did not destroy the sabbath but fulfilled it, showing that the day of rest from physical work for the sake of what is more excellent, is a truly blessed sabbath. It is linked with a blessing because when we are at leisure from earthly labours which are soon to cease, we wait patiently on God, seeking what is heavenly and imperishable with unashamed hope.

15. Under the old law one day of the week was the sabbath, and the Lord seemed to the foolish Jews to destroy what they thought of as their day of rest. However, He said, "I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). How was it that He did not do away with this sabbath but fulfilled the law regarding it? He promised to give the Holy Spirit to those who asked Him (*cf.* Luke 11:13) by day and by night, and commanded them to be always awake and watching,

saying, "Be ye ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:44). In this way He made all the days into blessed sabbaths for those who choose to obey Him perfectly, and so in this respect as well He did not abolish but fulfilled the law.

16. We, by contrast, are entangled in worldly affairs, but if you abstain from acquisitiveness[320] and mutual hatred, and strive to speak the truth and be chaste, then you too will make every day a sabbath by being inactive in evil. When a day comes that is especially profitable for salvation, you must free yourselves even from blameless work and words, patiently stay in God's Church, listen with understanding to the reading and teaching and contritely attend to the supplications, prayers and hymns to God. Thus you too will fulfil the sabbath, ordering your conduct according to the gospel of God's grace and lifting up the eyes of your understanding towards Christ sitting above the vaults of heaven with the Father and the Spirit. He has made us sons of God, not sons adopted in name alone (*cf.* Rom. 8:14–17), but having become members of one family with God and each other in the communion of the divine Spirit, through Christ's own body and blood.

17. Let us preserve this union with one another by indissoluble love. We should always look towards our Father in heaven, for we are no longer "of the earth, earthy", like "the first man", but like "the second man, the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:47). "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:48–49). As we lift up our hearts to Him we shall behold the great spectacle of our nature united for ever with the fire of the divinity. And laying aside everything to do with the coats of skins in which we were clothed because of the transgression (*cf.* Gen. 3:21), let us stand on holy ground (*cf.* Exod. 3:5), each one of us marking out his own holy ground through virtue and steadfast inclination towards God.

18. In this way we shall be bold when God comes in fire, and run forward to be enlightened and once enlightened live with Him for ever, to the glory of Him who is the light above all, the threefold Sun and sovereign brightness, to whom belong all glory, might, honour and worship, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY TWENTY-TWO

ON THE SAME FEAST[321]

REFERRING ALSO TO PASSIONS AND VIRTUES

DO YOU SEE THIS SHARED CELEBRATION and joy of ours, which the Lord bestowed on those who believe in Him with His resurrection and ascension? It sprang from affliction. Do you see this life, or rather, this immortality? It shone upon us through death. Do you see the heavenly height to which Christ ascended when He was taken up, and the sublime glory with which He was glorified according to the flesh? He attained to this by means of humility and dishonour. As the apostle says of Him, "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:8–11).

2. If, then, God highly exalted His Christ because He humbled Himself, suffered dishonour, was tempted and endured a shameful Cross and death for our sake, how will He save, glorify and raise us up if we neither choose humility, nor show love to our fellows, nor gain our souls by enduring temptation (*cf.* Luke 21:19), nor follow the saving Guide through the "strait gate" and along the "narrow way" leading to eternal life (Matt. 7:14)? To this we were called, says Peter, the chief apostle, "Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps" (*cf.* 1 Pet. 2:21).

3. But why is it that God's Christ went through such sufferings? Why did God highly exalt Him on that account, and why does He call us to share in His Son's sufferings? God alone is always the same, before all ages and unto all ages,[322] and remaining ever unchanged. He has no beginning and no end.[323] He neither comes into being nor suffers corruption, neither increases nor decreases.[324] He does not alter in any way or move from place to place.[325] He has no origin and is uncreated, immutable, unconfused and uncircumscribed.[326] He turns all things to the best as He wills, and permits whatever suffers change for the worse to do so.[327] Anything with a beginning is necessarily subject to change, since a beginning is a sort of change.[328] All creation, therefore, is liable to change: creatures visible and invisible, with or without senses or reason.[329] Only reasonable natures have free will,[330] and can turn to the good or the bad voluntarily by themselves.[331] They either attach themselves to God's will,[332] which results in their continuous progress, improvement and advancement,[333] or they oppose God's will, are justly subjected to what He permits, and sink wretchedly from bad to worse.

4. Two types of reasonable beings were created by God: firstly the immaterial angels, then material human beings. Neither of these, however, remained in obedience to their Creator and natural Master. The heavenly ranks of immaterial angels, which were created first, were the first to suffer from the disease of apostasy from God.[334] Those angels who stood aloof from this disease are light, and are always being filled full of light, becoming ever more radiant and making blessed use of their natural ability to change. They dance for joy around the first light, look continuously towards Him and are enlightened directly by Him, as they tirelessly sing the praises of the fount of light and, being ministers of light, transmit illuminating grace to those lower beings who are being enlightened.[335]

5. When Satan, who broke away and refused to obey God, fell from the light, embraced darkness and was condemned to eternal gloom, he became a vessel of darkness, its creator, author and minister, initially for himself and the angels who fell with him, then, alas, also for us in God's paradise, when we rebelled against God and believed the devil.[336] However, all the wicked angels are darkness in themselves and did not become evil just by sharing the devil's darkness. They are the origin and perfection of disobedience, the bitter root and source of all sin, and in particular, they were the cause of our own transgres-

sion. Therefore their sin is unpardonable,[337] they grow ever more uncontrollably dark, progress towards their own destruction and will not return to the Enlightener of angels and men. As we, by contrast, did not become evil on our own initiative,[338] God's chastening came upon us with mercy from the beginning. Although we have been condemned to death, it comes after that period of many years appointed for repentance, which Adam survived after the transgression and which each one of us must undergo.[339]

6. From this it can be clearly seen that we are not without hope of salvation, nor is it at all the right time for us to despair. All our life is a season of repentance, for God "desires not the death of the sinner", as it is written, "but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (*cf.* Ezek. 33:11 LXX). For, if there were no hope of turning back,[340] why would death not have followed immediately on disobedience, and why would we not be deprived of life as soon as we sin? For where there is hope of turning back, there is no room for despair.[341]

7. It is attested that Adam's son Abel seemed well-pleasing and acceptable to God in the very beginning (*cf.* Gen. 4:4). Then not long after our fall, Enos "hoped to call upon the Lord" (*cf.* Gen. 4:26 LXX).[342] As for Enoch, he not only pleased God but was also taken by Him (Gen. 5:24),[343] becoming a clear sign of His compassions towards us fallen men. Once more sin gained momentum, and once more God turned away from the human race and we were justly given over to a universal flood. But yet again His wrath was not unmitigated, nor His judgment merciless. God found Noah righteous in his generation (Gen. 6:9ff), and miraculously preserved him as a second root of mankind, as if He were providentially pruning the human race as it ran wild, but not destroying it by cutting it down or uprooting it. Afterwards Abraham was clearly faithful and well-pleasing to God, as He Himself bore witness (*cf.* Gen. 22:16–18). Later came his son Isaac, Isaac's son Jacob, and Jacob's sons the patriarchs, who received promises and prophecies of more excellent mercy and divine love that would powerfully overcome our sins, in that the great Shepherd Himself would come down from holy heaven to seek the lost sheep. Subsequently there appeared lawgivers, judges, and a royal line from which it was promised that Christ would come openly in the flesh.

8. Now Christ has come and been manifested, the pre-eternal Word of God who created us in the beginning. He became like us for

our sake in order to renew and re-create those who had grown old and been crushed by sin. Since our ruin was voluntary and our own doing, in His wisdom and love He brought about our renewal in that humanity which He assumed for our sake from the Virgin's womb. He fulfilled the whole mysterious plan of salvation, enabled us to return through His own union with us, opened up a road to heaven for us through the way He lived, and showed us this upward path by His teaching.

9. Since illnesses are cured by their opposite remedies, as we had been put to death by the wicked counsel of the evil one, we were made alive again by the good counsel of the good Lord. The deadly counsellor had at his disposal pleasure, glory and comfort, which enchanted mankind and dragged it down. So the Counsellor of true life Himself led the way along the strait and narrow way which leads to life above, and guided us in it. "Strive", He says, "to enter in at the strait gate" (Luke 13:24), and "strait and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, for wide and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction" (*cf.* Matt. 7:13–14). Elsewhere He warns more clearly against that path, saying, "Woe unto you that are rich! Woe unto you, that are full! Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you" (*cf.* Luke 6:24–26), thus declaring wretched all lovers of glory, pleasure and money. Again He says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth" (Matt. 6:19), and "Take heed to yourselves, lest at anytime your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life" (Luke 21:34), and "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44).

10. With such words as these He snatches us back from the way leading to death, whereas in other places He demonstrates how blessed the way is that leads to life: "Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake" (*cf.* Matt. 5:3–10), and "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven" (Matt. 19:21), and, "Everyone that hath left house, or lands, or any other earthly goods, for my sake, and the gospel's, shall receive an hundredfold and inherit eternal life" (*cf.* Mark 10:29–30, Matt. 19:29). He clamped down on anger to the extent that He declared it equal to murder and subject to the same condemnation, and said that anyone moved by anger to insult someone was in danger of hell-fire (*cf.* Matt. 5:22). On the other hand, He not only pronounced meekness blessed, but honoured it with the greatest rewards (Matt. 5:5). He condemned licentiousness

so severely that He called a passionate, inquisitive glance at another man's wife adultery (*cf.* Matt. 5:28), whereas He emphasized that anyone who acted with purity would be blessed, and afterwards see God (Matt. 5:8). Did He not show how unacceptable perjury was by forbidding even oaths that were faithfully kept, and regarding everything except "yes" and "no" as from the evil one? "Let your communication", He said, "be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt. 5:37). Why did He repeat the words "yea" and "nay"? The "yes" or "no" we utter has to be in agreement with the facts. Then "yes" will be "yes" and "no", "no". Otherwise, "yes" will be "no" and "no" will be "yes", which obviously comes from the devil. For "when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar" and "does not abide in the truth" (John 8:44).

11. In this way the Lord restricted and curbed our words and actions, and enclosed our lives in truth, righteousness, purity and freedom from anger. How does He advise us, though, to behave towards those who are angry with us and oppose us in word and deed and oppress us? "Overcome", says the Scripture, "evil with good" and "give place unto wrath" (Rom. 12:21, 19). "Resist not evil" (Matt. 5:39) and "recompense to no man evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17), or insult for insult, but "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). What will be the outcome of this life of constraint and the reward for these struggles? "That ye may be", it says, "children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:45), "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17); that you may have immortal life and receive an ineffable, unshakable, unending kingdom, living and reigning with God for endless ages.

12. Do you see what the strait and narrow way is, why we are asked to follow it, and to what glory, joy and reward it leads anyone choosing to go along it? If someone promised to give you long life if only you obeyed him, would you not eagerly submit to him, provided he did not demand anything impossible? If, moreover, he promised health, glory and pleasure for as long as you lived, is there anything you would not undertake for him? And if he offered a kingdom that was free from wars and untroubled as well as a long, healthy life, would you not be thrilled and think easy everything grievous that led to that end, sustaining yourself with expectations and enjoying the object of your

hope as if it were already present, as long as you considered he was telling the truth?

13. Given that we desire long life, should we not take eternal life into account? If we long for a kingdom which, however enduring, has an end, and glory and joy which, great as they are, will fade, and wealth that will perish with this present life, and we labour for the sake of such things; ought we not to seek the kingdom, glory, joy and riches which, as well as being all-surpassing, are unfading and endless, and ought we not to endure a little constraint in order to inherit it? Besides, we are presupposing a kingdom free from war, which is impossible on earth, and a life without sorrow, which you can only find in heaven. So let anyone who desires these things run towards heaven and, whether the way there be easy or difficult, let him journey along it, "rejoicing in hope" and "patient in tribulation" (Rom. 12:12).

14. You all know for what sort of reasons people subject themselves to hardship and death. Is a soldier not prepared to risk deadly danger and slaughter for his modest pay? For a small profit does the merchant not despise shipwreck, gales and violent men that cause damage at sea and on land? Does it not often happen that people become slaves of inhuman masters for the sake of a little bread? So shall we not serve the Lord who by nature loves mankind, risk our lives and get rid of superfluous possessions in order to acquire heavenly riches? Shall we not endure dishonour from men, usually scoundrels, so as to attain to divine glory, exchanging the mortal for the immortal? Shall we not be hungry in moderation and thirsty, that we may eat the bread of life which came down from heaven (John 6:51) and drink the true living water, whosoever is worthy to eat and drink of which, shall never hunger or thirst (John 4:10, 14)? Should we not cleanse the eye of our soul,[344] abstaining "from all defilement of the flesh and spirit" (2 Cor. 7:1), in order that we may see that light which preceded the sun,[345] or rather, that we become children of that light (Eph. 5:8), and other lights ourselves, through sharing in His light, holding forth the word of life (*cf.* Phil. 2:15–16)?

15. Brethren, I entreat you, let us not prefer darkness to light, the devil to God, that pleasure which is the servant of death and hell to eternal divine joy. Let us not choose destruction's abundant possessions, which, as the Lord showed us through the parable of the Rich Man (Luke 16:19ff), are fuel for the flame which eternally burns those who acquired wealth in an evil way, rather than the love that enriches. Instead, let us live as He did, and as He showed and taught us when He was made man. Let us take

up our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24), having crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal. 5:24), that we may be glorified together with Him (Rom. 8:17), and rise with Him, and after our resurrection be taken up to Him, as He was taken up today to the Father. He was standing in the midst of the disciples, as Luke says (Luke 24:36), or rather, He appeared to them, as Mark records (Mark 16:14) – for He did not arrive at the moment He appeared, but was always with them and showed Himself visibly when He wished. So, as He was standing in the midst of His disciples He ordered them to preach (Mark 16:15), gave them the promise of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49) and declared that He would be with them to the end (Matt. 28:20). After these words, He lifted up His hands and blessed them, and was taken up as they watched (Luke 24:50–51). In this way He showed that those who obeyed Him would also be carried up to God after rising again.

16. He was separated from them in the body (though as God He was with them) and, as He had promised them, He was taken up and sat on the right hand of the Father with our human flesh. As He lived, died, rose and ascended, so we all live, die and are resurrected. Not all of us, however, will attain to the ascension, but only those for whom to live is Christ, and to die for Him is gain (Phil. 1:21), those who, before they died, crucified sin through repentance and a way of life in accord with the gospel. After the resurrection of all, they alone will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (*cf.* 1 Thess. 4:17). A cloud also received the Lord as He ascended, as Luke relates in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:9). After the ascension the disciples did not see Him with their bodily eyes but with the eyes of their souls, yet they worshipped Him (Luke 24:52).[346] Let us do the same, then, like them, stay in peace (for Jerusalem means peace)[347] keeping peace within ourselves and with one another. Let each of us go into our own upper room (Acts 1:13), our mind, and stay there praying, and let us purify ourselves from passionate and base thoughts.

17. In this way we shall not miss the coming of the Comforter, and shall worship the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in spirit and in truth, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY TWENTY-THREE

On the Tenth Matins Gospel[348]

THE APPEARANCE OF JESUS TO THE SEVEN DISCIPLES
WHICH ALSO MENTIONS THE WARFARE
OF OUR SENSES AND MIND AGAINST OUR ENEMY

NOT ALL THE DIVINE GOSPEL PASSAGES appointed to be read at Matins are strictly speaking "morning Gospels", in the sense that they relate to events which took place at the start of the day. The Matins Gospels proclaim how our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ appeared to the holy apostles after the resurrection to prove He had risen, and these appearances happened not just at daybreak but at midday, in the afternoon and even in the evening. It was not morning when the Lord drew near to Luke and Cleopas as they were going to Emmaus and walked with them (Luke 24:13–35). "And they drew nigh", it says, "unto the village, whither they went and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent" (Luke 24:28–29). After breaking bread and giving it to them, He was made known to them. He disappeared from their sight and they immediately arose, returned to Jerusalem and told the other disciples what had happened on their journey. "And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them" (Luke 24:36), obviously when the next day had arrived following that evening. On another occasion He spoke with Peter after breakfast and made him the shepherd of us, his human sheep (John 21:15–17). "When they had dined", it says, "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" When he said he did, the Lord said, "Feed my lambs, tend my sheep."

2. How can these accounts of events which did not take place in the morning be considered or called "Matins Gospels"? Christ, the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2), is without beginning and pre-eternal. He is both immutable and unchangeable, as with Him there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning (Jas. 1:17). He is without end, never-setting, beaming out the true and heavenly light of the day without evening, in which the spirits of the righteous live with the good angels. When this present age reaches its end, the righteous shall also have their bodies with them, as heirs of the light and sons of the true day. That day continues for ever without evening and neither has, nor ever did have, a morning, since it has no beginning.

3. As for us, night possessed us and the shadow of death encompassed us, for we had fallen into sin and lost the power of sight which was ours by God's grace and by which we were able to perceive the light that bestows true life. Night and death had been poured out on our human nature, not because of any change in the true light, but because we had turned aside and no longer had any inclination towards the life-bearing light. In the last times, however, the giver of eternal light and source of true life has had mercy upon us. Not only did He come down to us for our sake and become a man like us, but endured the Cross and death for us and, having despoiled the realms of Hades by His death, rose on the third day, showing that the light of immortal, everlasting life was the light of resurrection for our human nature.

4. His resurrection was the firstfruits of them that slept (1 Cor. 15:20), and at His second coming the light of eternal life will embrace His disciples and then the true, uninterrupted day will dawn for them all. The Lord's resurrection is like the daybreak or morning of that day, and for that reason all the Gospel passages about the resurrection are "Matins" Gospels, Gospels of the daybreak. That is why today's account of events which took place towards evening and throughout the day can be rightly designated a "morning" reading.

5. The Matins Gospel read today for all to hear is a morning Gospel in both senses (John 21:1–14). It not only concerns the Lord's resurrection and His subsequent appearance, but it also deals with events at the beginning of the visible day. "When the morning", it says, "was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus" (John 21:4). Yet the passage begins by saying that Jesus,

having risen from the dead, showed Himself to His disciples at the sea of Tiberias. He revealed Himself, but they were out on the lake fishing, far from land, and did not recognize Him.

6. Then Jesus said to them, "Children". How full of gentleness, concern and sweetness is this word! "Children", He said, "have ye any meat?" (John 21:5). He did not ask because he did not know, but in order to clear the way for the miracle. When they told Him, "No", Jesus said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find" (John 21:6). By saying, "ye shall find", He showed that He was aware that they had been letting down their nets all night long without finding anything. When they realized that He knew what they had been doing without having been there, they readily heeded His words and obediently cast their nets.

7. They not only found fish, as He said they would, but found so many huge ones that they could not pull the net up into the boat - "they were not able", it says, "to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (John 21:6). Then John, who was particularly beloved of the Lord and Teacher and of all the most ready to recognize God, presumably remembered the original miraculous catch of fish in the lake of Gennesaret, when at the Lord's word they let down their nets and enclosed such a great multitude of fish that it was a wonder their net was not broken by the quantity of them (*cf.* Luke 5:1–9). "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord" (John 21:7). When Peter, who was more ardent and ready to act than any of them, heard that it was the Lord, he "girt his fisher's coat about him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea". The garment in question was a linen cloth, which the Syrians and Phoenicians wore over their clothes, which is why it is called a coat or, literally, an "over-garment".[349] Sometimes they wrapped it round their naked bodies, as in the case of the young man who was following the Lord when He was arrested by the Jews, who had a linen cloth cast about his naked body, and left it with those who seized him and fled away naked (Mark 14:51–52). However, Peter, who was naked, did not put on this over-garment, but wrapped it round himself folded up so that he could swim, for they were about a hundred yards from the land. In his eagerness Peter left everyone else behind, and the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish as if to offer it to the giver, that they might say to Him the hallowed words, "Thine own of thine own".[350]

8. "As soon then as they had come to land", it says, "they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread" (John 21:9).

Some have thought the word translated "fire of coals"[351] means a fire upon which the fish was cooking. But others say that the words "laid thereon" cannot refer to a fire, since bread could not be put on to a fire. Again, the passage does not say the fire was "kindled", but "spread out". Therefore some say that the word "fire of coals" could also mean some sort of animal hide which travellers used for a table. When the apostles stepped out on to dry land they saw a miracle greater than the one on the lake. They beheld fish and bread set ready for them that had come, not from the deep, but from non-being, as well as the joyful sight of the Lord. Full of wonder, they forgot about the fish they had caught. So the Lord said to them, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught" (John 21:10), to remind them to attend to them, to bring ashore the catch and count it, that nobody might say they had imagined the huge number of fish.

9. "Simon Peter went up", it says, "and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken" (John 21:11). The power of Christ which had kept the net unbroken could surely have strengthened the men to draw it in and made it light work, but did not do so, in order that the apostles should apprehend the miracle more clearly. Peter went back to the boat to help them bring in the catch, as they were not able. Then the Lord, wishing to make Himself known to all, said to them, "Come and dine" (John 21:12), and distributed the bread and fish to them with His own hands. By this act of service He showed that He it is who will supply and share out that future eternal joy which will come once the apostles' nets have made their catch (*cf.* Matt. 4:19); that is to say, when all who are worthy from every nation have been gathered into the true worship of God by the preaching of the gospel. Among these 153 great ones will appear, perhaps 153,000 or 1,530,000: He who works wonders full of mysteries knows.[352]

10. The unproductive night's work showed the fruitlessness of what was taught before He appeared. And letting down the nets on the right side and the catch in the morning demonstrated the effectiveness of the gospel teaching after His coming. When morning was come, when the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2) Himself shone forth to us in the flesh, the divine teaching became successful and effectual, gathering the multitudes of those being saved,[353] and drawing them to Christ. After the Lord gave the disciples the bread and the fish, the evangelist says, "This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to his disciples,

after that he was risen from the dead" (John 21:14). On the day of His resurrection He came to them as they were assembled indoors in the evening (John 20:19). Then eight days later He returned, when Thomas was with the others (John 20:26). Now, on this third occasion, He did not come to them but showed Himself to them, demonstrating that He was present with them even when invisible to their natural eyes, and that He could enable them to see Him whenever He wished; for immortal bodies have this capacity.

11. Brethren, He is near each one of us, even if unseen.[354] That is why He said to the apostles when He ascended, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). Every day we should stand in awe of Him, as He is with us, and do what is pleasing before Him. If we are unable now to perceive Him with our physical eyes, we can, if we are watchful, see Him continuously with the eyes of our understanding,[355] and not just see Him, but reap great benefits from Him. This vision destroys all sin, demolishes all evil, and drives away everything bad. It yields every virtue, gives birth to purity and dispassion, and bestows eternal life and the kingdom without end. As we attend to this joyful sight, gazing with our mind's eye on Christ as though He were present,[356] each of us will say with David, "Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident" (Ps. 27:3).

12. Brethren, there is a warfare of the senses which comes from outside ourselves and drags into sin all who do not courageously resist. But such warfare is not always roused against us, nor are our senses continually active. Sometimes, even when our senses are in action, sin is left undone because of the absence of means, or because the time and place is not suitable. For when appropriate circumstances are lacking, thieves, robbers, the immoral, the adulterous, the rapacious and the greedy cannot perpetrate sin. However, within our own minds there is a different battle, the warfare of thoughts,[357] which is much more grievous than that of the senses. It is always active and needs neither physical means, nor particular times and places to accomplish wickedness. Whereas our senses' struggle with sin originates from the impressions made by things on our sight, hearing and other senses, the battle of the mind is set in motion within us by the direct action of the evil spirits themselves, and by their attacks and provocations.[358] If someone is victorious in the warfare of the senses, that does not mean that he is invincible in that of the mind. But anyone

who conquers the inner battle, mightily overcomes in the outer one. As the apostle says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

13. It was the old law which more than anything else equipped mankind for the external combat of the senses, commanding us to avoid the consequence of sin. But we are stirred up to wage the war within us by the law of grace, the teaching of the gospel, which forbids us to have in our hearts anger, adulterous thoughts or desire provoked by the devil, arms us against such suggestions and rouses us to resist. As the apostle wrote to the Ephesians, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:11–12). They find it hard to bear that they have fallen from those high places, and are frantically provoked against us, who, through raising our minds to God, have "our commonwealth in heaven" (*cf.* Phil. 3:20).[359]

14. It is my plea that we may earnestly avoid drunkenness and self-indulgence, and speaking, seeing or hearing shameful things, which arouse our flesh, summon us to a battle which is not ours, and stop us observing and rightly conducting our own inner war. As a consequence we are bound to be defeated and fall, to be more or less completely captured by sin, invisibly encircled by our inner enemies, and handed over by our own selves to our attackers from without. But let us abstain from those fleshly pleasures, which are neither good nor permissible, and set ourselves in battle against the principalities and powers of that terrible darkness, who inwardly suggest passionate thoughts and evil desires. Obviously I mean the demons, who are the rulers of the evil darkness, having been the first to desire it, and are lords of the world, though only of those people in whom the word of the Lord finds no place at all: "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world" (John 15:19), and have made you My own by re-birth through My grace.

15. Over those who have voluntarily submitted to them, the evil spirits have power. If, however, we simply watch, lift up our mind's eye[360] to the Master who has ransomed us from the devil's harsh service, and pay attention to Him as ever present, we shall not be afraid, as the Psalm says, of "the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction and demon

of noonday" (*cf.* Ps. 91:5–6 LXX). When they attempt to approach us they will fall and not come near us, nor shift us from virtue's secure foundation. As the same Psalmwriter says of himself, "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Ps. 16:8). If we too always see Him as being before us, if sometimes we sing His praise, at other times entreat Him and at others give Him thanks, according as we are able, He will take hold of each of us by the right hand and guide us with His counsel and might (*cf.* Ps. 73:23–24), rescue us from the power of darkness and reinstate us in His kingdom, bestowing incorruptible eternal life upon us.

16. May we all attain to this, to His glory and the glory of His Father without beginning, and the co-eternal, life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY TWENTY-FOUR

On How the Holy Spirit was Manifested And Shared Out at Pentecost[361]

ALSO ABOUT REPENTANCE

A SHORT WHILE AGO, with the strong eyes of faith, we beheld Christ ascending, no less clearly than those accounted worthy to be eye-witnesses.[362] Nor are we less favoured than they. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed", says the Lord (John 20:29), referring to those who have found assurance through hearing, and see by faith.[363] Recently we saw Christ lifted up from the ground bodily (Acts 1:9). Now, through the Holy Spirit sent by Him to His disciples, we see how far Christ ascended and to what dignity He carried up the nature He assumed from us. Clearly He went up as high as the place from which the Spirit sent by Him descended. He who spoke through the prophet Joel showed us whence the Spirit comes, saying, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28), and to Him David addressed the words, "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth" (Ps. 104:30). It follows that at His ascension Christ went up to the Father on high, as far as His Fatherly bosom, from which comes the Spirit. Having been shown, even in His human form, to share the Father's glory, Christ now sent forth the Spirit who comes from the Father and is sent by Him from heaven. But when we hear that the Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son, this does not mean that the Spirit has no part in their greatness, for He is not just sent, but also Himself sends and consents to be sent.[364]

2. This is clearly shown by Christ's words spoken through the prophet, "Mine hand hath laid the foundation of the earth and stretched out the heavens, and now the Lord God, and His Spirit, hath sent me" (*cf.* Isa. 48:13–16). Again, speaking through the same prophet He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek" (Isa. 61:1). The Holy Spirit is not just sent, but Himself sends the Son, who is sent by the Father. He is therefore shown to be the same as the Father and the Son in nature, power, operation and honour.[365] By the good pleasure of the Father and the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, the only-begotten Son of God, on account of the boundless ocean of divine love for mankind, bowed the heavens and came down (Ps. 18:9). He appeared on earth after our fashion, lived among us,[366] and did and taught great, wonderful and sublime things truly worthy of God, which led those who obeyed Him towards deification and salvation.[367]

3. After willingly suffering for our salvation, being buried and rising on the third day, He ascended into heaven and sat down on the right hand of the Father, whence He co-operated in the descent of the divine Spirit upon His disciples by sending down together with the Father the power from on high, as Both had promised (*cf.* Luke 24:49).[368] Having sat down in the heavens, He seems to call to us from there, "If anyone wants to approach this glory, become a partaker of the kingdom of heaven, be called a son of God and find eternal life, inexpressible honour, pure joy and never-ending riches, let him heed My commandments and imitate as far as he can My own way of life. Let him follow My actions and teachings when I came to the world in the flesh to establish saving laws and offer Myself as a pattern." Truly the Saviour confirmed the gospel teaching by His deeds and miracles, and fulfilled it through His sufferings. He proved how beneficial it was for salvation by His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and now by the descent of the divine Spirit upon His disciples, the event we celebrate today. After rising from the dead and appearing to His disciples, He said as He was taken up into heaven, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). "For ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (*cf.* Acts 1:8).

4. When the fiftieth day after the resurrection had come, the day we now commemorate, all the disciples were gathered with one accord

in the upper room, each having also gathered together his thoughts (for they were devoting themselves intently to prayer and hymns to God). "And suddenly", says Luke the evangelist, "there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:1–11). This is the sound which the prophetess Hannah foretold when she received the promise concerning Samuel: "The Lord went up to heaven and thundered; and he shall give strength and exalt the horn of his anointed" (*cf.* 1 Sam. 2:10 LXX). Elijah's vision also forewarned of this sound: "Behold the voice of a light breeze, and in it was the Lord" (*cf.* 1 Kgs. 19:12 LXX). This "voice of a light breeze" is the sound of breath.[369] You might also find a reference to it in Christ's gospel. According to John the theologian and evangelist, "In the last day, that great day of the feast", that is to say Pentecost, "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink . . . This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive" (John 7:37–39). Again, after His resurrection He breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22).

5. That cry of Christ prefigured this sound, and His breathing upon the disciples foretold the breath, which is now poured down abundantly from above and resounds with a great voice heard far and wide, summoning everything under heaven, pouring grace over all who approach with faith and filling them with it. It is forceful in that it is all-conquering, storms the ramparts of evil, and destroys all the enemy's cities and strongholds. It brings low the proud and lifts up the humble in heart, binds what should not have been loosed, breaks the bonds of sins and undoes what is held fast. It filled the house where they were sitting, making it a spiritual font, and accomplishing the promise which the Saviour made them when He ascended, saying, "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). Even the name which He gave them proved to be true, for through this noise from heaven the apostles actually became sons of Thunder (*cf.* Mark 3:17). "And there appeared unto them", it says, "cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:3–4).

6. Those miracles accomplished by the Lord in the flesh, which bore witness that He was God's only-begotten Son in His own person,[370] united with us in the last days, came to an end. On the other hand, those wonders began which proclaimed the Holy Spirit

as a divine person in His own right, that we might come to know and contemplate the great and venerable mystery of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit had been active before: it was He who spoke through the prophets[371] and proclaimed things to come. Later He worked through the disciples to drive out demons and heal diseases. But now He was manifested to all in His own person[372] through the tongues of fire, and by sitting enthroned as Lord[373] upon each of Christ's disciples, He made them instruments of His power.

7. Why did He appear in the form of tongues? It was to demonstrate that He shared the same nature as the Word of God, for there is no relationship closer than that between word and tongue. It was also because of teaching, since teaching Christ's gospel needs a tongue full of grace. But why fiery tongues? Not just because the Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and the Son – and our God is fire (*cf.* Heb. 12:29), a fire consuming wickedness – but also because of the twofold energy of the apostles' preaching, which can bring both benefit and punishment. As it is the property of fire to illuminate and burn, so Christ's teaching enlightens those who obey but finally hands over the disobedient to eternal fire and punishment. The text says, "tongues like fire" not "tongues of fire", that no one might imagine it was ordinary physical fire, but that we might understand the manifestation of the Spirit using fire as an example. Why did the tongues appear to be divided among them? Because the Spirit is given by measure by the Father to all except Christ (John 3:34), who Himself came from above. He, even in the flesh, possessed the fullness of divine power and energy, whereas the grace of the Holy Spirit was only partially, not fully, contained within anyone else. Each one obtained different gifts, lest anyone should suppose the grace given to the saints by the Holy Spirit was theirs by nature.

8. The fact that the divine Spirit sat upon them is proof not just of His lordly dignity, but of His unity. He sat, it says, "upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:3–4). For although divided in His various powers and energies, in each of His works the Holy Spirit is wholly present and active, undividedly divided, partaken of while remaining complete, like the sun's ray.[374] They spoke with other tongues, other languages, to people from every nation, as the Spirit gave them utterance. They became instruments of the divine Spirit, inspired and motivated according to His will and power. Anything taken hold of by somebody outside itself,

sharing in the energy but not the essence of the one acting through it, is his instrument. As David declared through the Holy Spirit, "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer" (Ps. 45:1). The pen is the writer's instrument, sharing in the energy, though obviously not the essence, of the writer, and inscribing whatever he wishes and is able to write.

9. In what sense is the Holy Spirit the promise of the Father? He foretold Him through His prophets, saying through Ezekiel, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will put my spirit within you" (*cf.* Ezek. 36:26–27). Through Joel He proclaims, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" (*cf.* Joel 2:28). Longing for the Holy Spirit, Moses cried out in anticipation, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them" (Num. 11:29). As the gracious will of the Father and His promise are one and the same as the Son's, Christ told those who believed in Him, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, it shall be to him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (*cf.* John 4:14), and, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). By way of explanation, the evangelist says, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive" (John 7:39). As He approached His saving passion He told His disciples, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:15–17). And again, "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things" (John 14:25–26). And yet again, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26), and "he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13).

10. The promise was now fulfilled and the Holy Spirit, given and sent by both the Father and the Son, descended. He shone round about the holy disciples and with divine power kindled them all like lamps or, rather, He revealed them as heavenly lights set above the whole world, who had the word of eternal life, and through them He illuminated all the earth. If from one burning lamp someone lights another, then another from that one, and so on in succession, he has light continuously. In the same way, through the apostles ordaining

their successors, and these successors ordaining others, and so on, the grace of the Holy Spirit is handed down through all generations and enlightens all who obey their spiritual shepherds and teachers.[375]

11. Each hierarch in his turn comes to give the city this grace and gift of God and the enlightenment of the divine Spirit through the gospel. Those who reject any of them, as can happen, interrupt God's grace, break the divine succession, separate themselves from God and deliver themselves up to sinful rebellions and all kinds of disasters, as you are obviously aware from recent experience.[376] If, however, now that you have returned to the shepherd of your souls appointed by God, you obey my counsels for salvation, you will really and truly celebrate this annual commemoration of the coming of the divine Spirit, who of His unimaginable love descended for our salvation, just as the only-begotten Son of God, because of this same love and for the same purpose, bowed the heavens, came down and assumed our flesh.

12. Christ had ascended bodily into heaven, so if He had not sent His Holy Spirit to accompany and strengthen His disciples and their successors in following generations who taught the gospel of grace, He would not have been preached to all nations, nor would the proclamation have been passed down to us. That is why the Lord, in His all-surpassing love for mankind, showed at Pentecost that His disciples were partakers, fathers and ministers of everlasting light and life, who bring us to new birth for eternal life and make those who are worthy children of the light and fathers of enlightenment. Thus, He Himself is with us unto the end of the world, as was promised through the Spirit (Matt. 28:20). For He is one with the Father and the Spirit, not according to hypostasis, but in His divinity, and God is one in three, in one tri-hypostatic and almighty divinity. The Holy Spirit always existed and was with the Son in the Father. How could the Father and divine Mind be without beginning if the Son and Word were not also without beginning?[377] How could there be a pre-eternal Word without there also being a pre-eternal Spirit? Thus the Holy Spirit ever was and is and will be,[378] co-Creator with the Father and the Son, together with them renewing that which has suffered corruption, and sustaining the things that endure. He is everywhere present and fills, directs and oversees everything. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit", says the psalmist to God, "Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Ps. 139:7).

13. He is not just everywhere, but also above all, not just in every age and time, but before them all. And, according to the promise, the Holy Spirit will not just be with us until the end of the age, but rather will stay with those who are worthy in the age to come, making them immortal and filling their bodies as well with eternal glory,[379] as the Lord indicated by telling His disciples, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). "It is sown", says the apostle (meaning buried and committed to the earth), "a dead natural body", that is to say, an ordinary created body with a created soul, stable and capable of movement. "It is raised" (that is, comes back to life), "a spiritual body" (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:44), which means a supernatural body, framed and ordered by the Holy Spirit, and clothed in immortality, glory and incorruption by the Spirit's power (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:53). "The first man, Adam", he says, "was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly" (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:45, 47–48).

14. Who are these heavenly people? Those who are steadfast and immovable in their faith, who always abound in the Lord's work and bear the image of the heavenly Adam through their obedience to Him. "He that obeyeth not the Son", says John, the Lord's Forerunner, through John the evangelist, "shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). Who can endure God's wrath? "It is a fearful thing", brethren, "to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). If we fear the hands of our enemies, even though the Lord says, "fear not them which kill the body" (Matt. 10:28), who in his right mind will not fear God's hands raised in anger against the disobedient? For the wrath of God will be revealed against everyone who lives impurely and unjustly without repenting and holds the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).

15. Let us flee from wrath and hasten through repentance to obtain the kindness and compassion of the divine Spirit. If anyone feels hatred towards another, let him be reconciled with him and restore love, lest his hatred and conflict with his brother should bear witness against him that he does not love God. "For if you do not love your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen?" (*cf.* 1 John 4:20). When we love one another, let our love be

unfeigned, and let us show it in deeds, by neither saying nor doing, nor even enduring to hear, anything insulting or harmful to our brethren. As Christ's beloved theologian taught us, "Brethren, do not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (*cf.* 1 John 3:18).

16. Anyone who has fallen into fornication, adultery or any other such bodily impurity, should desist from this revolting filth and cleanse himself through confession, tears, fasting and the like. For God judges unrepentant fornicators and adulterers. He condemns them, dismisses them and consigns them to hell, unquenchable fire and other never-ending punishments, saying, "Let the impure and accursed be taken away, lest they see and enjoy the glory of the Lord" (*cf.* Isa. 26:10 LXX). Let thieves and all who are openly grasping and greedy stop stealing, defrauding and seizing what belongs to others, but also share their own possessions with those in need. In a word, if you desire life, to see good days, to be rescued from enemies both visible and invisible, the barbarians currently threatening us,[380] and those punishments reserved for the prince of evil and his angels, depart from all evil and do good (Ps. 34:12, 14). "Be not deceived", the apostle tells the Corinthians, "neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men,[381] nor covetous, neither drunkards nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (*cf.* 1 Cor. 6:9–10). If someone has no inheritance with God he neither belongs to God nor has God as his Father.

17. But let us, brethren, I beseech you, abstain from deeds and words hateful to God, that we may boldly call God our Father.[382] Let us truly return to Him, that He too may turn back to us, cleanse us from all sin and make us worthy of His divine grace. Then shall we keep festival both now and for ever, and celebrate in a godly and spiritual way the accomplishments of God's promise, the coming of the All-holy Spirit among men and His resting upon them; the fulfillment and perfection of the blessed hope in Christ Himself our Lord.

18. For to Him belong glory, honour and worship, with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY TWENTY-FIVE

DELIVERED ON THE SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS[383]

TRULY "GOD IS GLORIOUS in his saints" (Ps. 68:35 LXX). Let us call to mind the martyrs' superhuman struggles, how in the weakness of their flesh they put to shame the evil one's strength, disregarding pain and wounds as they struggled bodily against fire, sword, all different kinds of deadly tortures, patiently resisting while their flesh was cut, their joints dislocated and their bones crushed, and keeping the confession of faith in Christ in its integrity, complete, unharmed and unshaken. As a result there were bestowed on them the incontrovertible wisdom of the Spirit and the power to work miracles. Let us consider the patience of holy men and women, how they willingly endured long periods of fasting, vigil and various other physical hardships as though they were not in the body, battling to the end against evil passions and all sorts of sin, in the invincible inner warfare against principalities, powers and spiritual wickedness (Eph. 6:12). They wore away their outer selves and made them useless, but their inner man was renewed and deified by Him from whom they also received gifts of healing and mighty works. When we think on these matters and understand that they surpass human nature, we are filled with wonder and glorify God who gave them such grace and power. For even if their intentions were good and noble, without God's strength they could not have gone beyond the bounds of their nature and driven away the bodiless enemy while clothed in their bodies.[384]

2. That is why, when the psalmist and prophet declared, "God is glorious in his saints", he went on to say, "he giveth strength and power unto his people" (Ps. 68:35 LXX). Carefully consider the force

of these prophetic words. Whereas God, according to the psalmist, gives all his people strength and power – for He shows no partiality (*cf.* Acts 10:34) – He is glorified only in His saints. The sun pours down its rays abundantly upon all alike, but they are visible only to those with open eyes. Those with clear-sighted, pure eyes benefit from the pure light of the sun, not those whose vision is dimmed because illness, mist or something similar has afflicted their eyes. In the same way, God richly bestows His help on all, for He is the ever-flowing, enlightening and saving fount of mercy and goodness. But not everyone takes advantage of His grace and power to practise and perfect virtue or show forth miracles, only those with a good intent,[385] who demonstrate their love and faith towards God by good works (*cf.* Jas. 2:20–26),[386] who turn away completely from everything base, hold fast to God's commandments and lift up the eyes of their understanding[387] to Christ the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2). He not only invisibly holds out a helping hand from above to those who struggle, but we also hear Him speaking to us and urging us on in today's Gospel.[388] "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men", He says, "him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32).

3. Notice that we cannot boldly proclaim our faith in Christ and confess Him without His strength and assistance. Nor will our Lord Jesus Christ speak out on our behalf in the age to come, recommend us to the heavenly Father and make us His kin, unless we give Him reason to do so. To make this clear, He does not say, "Whosoever shall confess me before men", but "Whosoever shall make his confession *in Me*" (Matt. 10:32),[389] that is to say, whoever is able, in Christ and with His help, to declare his faith with boldness. Likewise, again, He does not say, "I will confess him", but "I will acknowledge what is *in him*",[390] meaning that His confession will be in respect of the good fight and patient endurance which such a person has shown in the cause of godliness. Take note, however, of what He goes on to say about those who are cowardly and betray the faith: "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:33). Here He does not say, "Whosoever shall deny *in Me*", since the person who denies God does so because he is bereft of God's help. Why has he been abandoned and forsaken by God? Because he first abandoned God by loving what is transitory and worldly more than the heavenly and everlasting good things

promised by Him. In His turn, Christ will not just disown what is in him, but deny him himself, finding in him nothing at all that could be used in his defence.

4. Whoever loves according to God, "dwelleth in God, and God in him", as Christ's beloved theologian tells us (1 John 4:16). So he who truly loves God has God dwelling in him, and naturally confesses his faith in God. On the other hand, as he dwells in God, God too will acknowledge him. The words, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me, him will I confess also" (*cf.* Matt. 10:32), demonstrate the unbroken union between God and those who acknowledge Him, from which he who denies Him has distanced himself. These mutual exchanges between God and man are divinely just, and fairly reward like with like.

5. Although the prizes God gives us resemble our offerings to Him, consider the overwhelming superiority of God's recompense to those who, in Him, confessed Him. Each saint, as a servant of God, boldly acknowledged Him in this fleeting life before mortal men, though actually just for a brief period of this present age and in front of only a few. By contrast, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God and Lord of heaven and earth, will speak openly on their behalf in that eternal, never-ending world before God the Father, surrounded by angels, archangels and all the heavenly host, and in the presence of all mankind from Adam onwards. For all will rise and appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Then, before everyone and in the sight of all, He will proclaim, glorify and crown those who demonstrated their faith in Him to the end.

6. How can we attempt to tell of those extraordinary crowns and the excellence of those future rewards, which eyes like ours cannot see, nor ears hear, nor hearts understand? (*cf.* 1 Cor. 2:9, Isa. 64:4). But what about things visible to us now? Who can speak adequately of the divine glory which constantly accompanies the tombs of the saints and their relics, the holy fragrance issuing from them, the flowing myrrh, the spiritual healings, the miraculous works, and all the other saving manifestations to us from that source?

7. Shall I say something about the honours we offer them? For a short while, as I have mentioned, each of the saints fearlessly made a godly confession before certain rulers and kings. Now, however, kings, rulers and all their subjects sing hymns of praise, magnify, honour, glorify and venerate not just the saints themselves, but their icons,

as lords, or as something higher than rulers and kings. They willingly prostrate themselves before these icons with joy, and wish to leave this devotion as their greatest legacy to their children, a blessed inheritance bringing sublime happiness.[391] This is a sign, a proof, and, as it were, a foretaste of that indescribable future glory which the spirits of the righteous now have in heaven, and to which their bodies, having shared to the end in their godly struggles, will also attain in the age to come.[392] To teach His holy disciples and apostles about the excellence of this glory and of the good things to come, the Lord tells them, "Verily, I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). He then goes on to say generally to all believers, "And everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. 19:29). "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37).

8. As God the Father gave His beloved Son for our sake, and the only-begotten Son of God gave Himself for us, it is rightly demanded of us that we disregard the members of our family if they are an obstacle to piety and a godly way of life. Nor should I be referring only to relatives. Should the occasion demand, it is just and necessary for each one of us to give up his own soul, if he wants to gain eternal life, since the Son of God Himself laid down His life for our sake. As He Himself says, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:38). The cross means crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts (*cf.* Gal. 5:24).

9. In a time of religious peace, we take up our cross and follow Christ by putting our evil passions and desires to death through virtuous living. But when persecutions come, we must despise our own life, give up our soul for the sake of our faith, and thus take up our cross and follow the Lord, so as to inherit eternal life. "He that findeth his soul", says the Scripture, "shall lose it; and he that loseth his soul for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:39).[393] What does this mean? Man is twofold: the outer man, that is, the body, and the inner man, the soul. When someone delivers up his outer self to death, he loses his soul, which becomes separated from him. Anyone who loses his soul in this way for the sake of Christ and the gospel will

certainly find it again, having procured for it heavenly, eternal life. He will recover it at the resurrection in this new state, and through it his body will become as heavenly and eternal as his soul. To crucify the flesh with its passions and desires; to be ready for extreme dishonour and the greatest possible disgrace for the sake of a noble death; to lose your soul for the gospel: these are difficult, great and, it could be said, apostolic matters, only for the perfect. So the Lord goes on to say something both for the encouragement of those waging this supernatural struggle, and for the salvation of those less perfect. "He that receiveth you", that is to say, the apostles and the fathers and religious teachers after them, "receiveth me", He tells us, "and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (Matt. 10:40).

10. He arranges a welcome here for those who are perfect, and provides for the salvation of those souls who are not, through welcoming those who are. Do you see how great the reward is for receiving people who live godly lives and teach the truth? Anyone who welcomes them welcomes the Father and the Son. So how should we receive such people? Not just by entertaining them and making them comfortable, but by obeying them. On this subject Christ says elsewhere to His disciples, "He that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16). But even the person who offers hospitality and refreshment to God's servants will receive a great reward if he does it for God's sake. For the Lord says, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Matt. 10:41). How shall he receive the reward of a prophet or a righteous man? As the apostle says, "That our abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply to our want" (*cf.* 2 Cor. 8:14). Anyone who, for God's sake, welcomes a righteous man because he is righteous, and makes him comfortable, will reap great benefits, even if he does nothing exceptional and only gives a little. "Whosoever", He says, "shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. 10:42).

11. In these sayings and commandments the Lord is concerned not so much with the righteous and His disciples as with those offering them hospitality. If His only thought was for His disciples, He would simply have exhorted people to receive them, and would

have requested that they be welcomed and refreshed, regardless of how it was done. But by adding that they should be received in the name of a prophet, a disciple or a righteous man, He shows that He is more concerned about the people who offer the welcome, directing their thoughts towards something more excellent, that they might subsequently gain a reward as well as virtue. Christ's Church honours those who truly live according to God's will even after their death, and every day of the year commemorates those saints who departed hence on that day and left this transitory life. It also sets before us the life of each one of them for our benefit, and shows us their end, whether they died in peace or finished their life as martyrs.

12. Now, after Pentecost, the Church gathers all the saints together and offers up a common hymn to all, partly because they are all united with one accord and are one, according to the prayer of our Lord, "Grant them", says the Lord to His Father in the Gospels, "that they all may be one; as I, Father, am in thee, and thou in me, that they also may be truly one in us" (*cf.* John 17:21). But this is not the only reason why the Church offers up one hymn to them all. It is also because during Holy Lent and the fifty days following, it strives to declare and magnify all the works of the Lord. As you know, it celebrates everything: how the world was made in the beginning by God; how Adam was banished from paradise and from God; how in times gone by God's people were called; how they too were cast out from friendship with God because they transgressed; how God's only-begotten Son bowed the heavens and came down for our sake, did extraordinary wonders for our good and taught the way of salvation, suffered and died on our behalf, was buried as man, rose again as God on the third day, ascended into heaven, whence He had earlier descended, with His flesh, and, having sat down on the right hand of the Father, sent down the All-Holy Spirit. Now that the Church of God has sung hymns of praise in honour of all these events, it adds what is lacking, and shows how many great fruits have been harvested for eternal life by the coming of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. It commemorates all the saints together and renders praise and honour today to them all.

13. Let us too, brethren, give honour to God's saints. But *how* should we honour them? By imitating them and purifying ourselves "from all defilement of flesh and spirit" (2 Cor. 7:1), and hastening towards holiness through abstaining from all evils. If we keep our

tongue from swearing and making false oaths, as well as from speaking nonsense and abuse, and stop our lips from uttering lies and slanders, then we offer the saints sweet praise.

14. If we do not cleanse ourselves in this way, each of us shall rightly hear from them those words God directed to the sinner. How can you dare to commemorate the names of the saints, to take them on your tongue and tell of their way of life, filled as it was with every virtue and purity? You, by contrast, have hated virtuous living and have driven away purity from your soul and body. "When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son" (Ps. 50:18–20). Neither God nor His saints, brethren, accept hymns from such mouths. If none of us will take something we need from our own hand if it has touched dung, unless we wash it first, how will God accept the offerings of a dirty body and soul, unless we cleanse ourselves first? Sin, deceit, lies, envy, hatred, greed, treachery, shameful thoughts and words, and the polluted acts which result from them, are all much more disgusting than dung. But how can someone who has fallen into these be purified? Through repentance, confession, good works and fervent prayer to God.

15. When on the feasts commemorating the saints we all take a holiday from our trades and businesses, we should occupy our minds with the question of how we can distance ourselves from the sins and defilements into which each of us has fallen, and become free of them. On the other hand, if we amuse ourselves to the detriment of our souls, pay no attention and get drunk, how can we claim to be celebrating the saints, since we have made the day impure? I beg you, brethren, let us not keep the feasts like that, but let us, like the saints, present our bodies and souls as a pleasing offering to God on these days of celebration, that by the prayers of the saints we may come to share in that endless festival and joy.

16. May we all attain to this, by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belongs glory, with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY TWENTY-SIX

Delivered at Harvest Time[394]

ALSO CONCERNING THE SPIRITUAL HARVEST

IN HIS GOODNESS THE MAKER and Lord of all created everything out of nothing. Afterwards, according to His surpassing power and the inexpressible wealth of His wisdom and kindness which are beyond understanding, He made man in a mysterious way, gathering together and, so to speak, summing up all creation in one small creature.[395] That is why he was last to be created, belonging to both the visible and invisible worlds and adorning them both. In man God united mind and senses in an indescribable manner,[396] using imagination, opinion and thought[397] to bind them truly together. Thus, He made a living creature that was both spiritual and visible, just as He had joined the perpetually moving heavens to the unmoving earth by means of what lies between, and made a world that was both stable and in motion.[398] Man and the world were both the work of the same Craftsman, and have much in common, but whereas the world is larger in size, man is more excellently constructed. He is placed in the world like a treasure inside a large house which is far more valuable than the house containing it, or like an intricate and expensive vessel belonging to a king kept inside his palace. The palace is made out of very large stones which are easy to find, whereas the vessel is decorated with small stones, which are rare and very costly.[399]

2. How much greater is the human mind than the heavens! It is the image of God,[400] knows God, and alone of everything on earth can, if it wishes, become God, exalting man's humble body at the same

time. How much more excellent are man's senses than the earth! For through them, not only is man able to comprehend the earth's dimensions and various properties, but his knowledge extends even to the heavenly bodies. He has observed their movements and learnt all the different types of conjunctions and separations of the stars, some of them momentous, and thus has laid the foundation of scientific knowledge.[401] Even the things between the heavens and the earth are of less value than what lies on the boundary between man's mind and his senses, for although they serve the same purpose in our analogy, in context, they are as different as can be.[402]

3. God adorned human nature in this way because He was going to clothe Himself in it. He was to assume it from the blood of the Virgin, transform it into something better, and set it on high above all principality and power, and every name that is named, either in this world or in that which is to come (*cf.* Eph. 1:21). Because in His wisdom and love for mankind He was making provision for this, He honoured our nature with many and varied gifts. As He gave us two or, more accurately, many faculties for gaining knowledge: our mind, our senses, and what lies between them, He also made all the objects of our knowledge and action twofold and complex.[403]

4. It is harvest time now, but there is no harvest among us. For we yield not just a visible harvest, but also a harvest of rational souls and a spiritual harvest, and in these cases the season of harvest is all the year round. As we stand now within this holy place, let us raise our heads a little higher, put our hopes in God and, lifting up our minds, consider the human and spiritual harvest. I shall now say a few words on this subject to your charity, to provide you with a starting point for salvation. Every year when this season comes round and I see the mass of people streaming out of town to work at harvesting or gathering and collecting fruit, I think to myself as follows. "Given that there is also a harvest of men which cuts them off from this present, fleeting, transitory life and transfers them to a different life which lasts for ever, do any of those harvesting inanimate ears of wheat or employing others to do so, or any of those picking fruit, or buying fruit picked by others to store it in barns, remember that harvest which will come upon them? Do any of them seek to be declared beloved by the Husbandman of our souls and worthy of His heavenly storehouses and mansions when the time comes? Or do they all have their minds

bent down to the ground, like the bodies of people digging, not lifting up their thoughts and rising above earthly things?"

5. If it is so, we are no different from the heathen, whose mental and bodily powers are completely occupied with earthly concerns. They take no account of things to come, and obviously neither believe in, nor have any concept of, heavenly matters. That is why, according to Scripture, the wicked man's whole life is spent in worrying about things below which perish (*cf.* Job 15:20 LXX). When Christ told us in the Gospels, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on" (Matt. 6:25), He added, "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek" (Matt. 6:32). Do not leave your work, but stop being anxious about it, putting your hope in God instead, that you may neither regard your toil as hopeless, nor wrongly put your trust in it. "Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed" (Matt. 6:31), thinking constantly about these matters as if you were refusing to accept the accusation that awaits you, and were dragging your soul down in the direction of earthly cares, without allowing them to look up.

6. God arranged our nature as He did so that whether our body was at rest, or moving, or going from one place to another, or doing whatever it had to do, our thoughts could be on other things. We use our bodies for physical work, but with our souls we look up to God and ask Him for heavenly blessings. Having told us not to take thought for our lives, as that was a characteristic of the heathen, He went on to say, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33), to show that if your soul's attention is on God, you will not as a result lack anything the body needs. Rather, you will unfailingly have everything it requires, as well as your soul's salvation, through the generosity of Him who opens His hand and fills every living creature with His blessing. To Him David said, "Thou hast made harvest time[404] and spring" (Ps. 74:17 LXX), meaning not only the visible seasons, but the spiritual. That is why he mentioned harvest before spring, because unless you are first cut off from unbelieving and depraved people and actions, you will not blossom with the virtues.

7. So, as well as the physical summer, spring, and seedtime, there is also the reasonable; as well as the reasonable, there is also the spiritual, and the same can be said of planting, grape-harvest, and the

other seasons. For there is a spiritual cultivation and a spiritual field, the farmer of which is God. As the apostle told the Corinthians, "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9). The Lord Himself said to His disciples, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:5, 1). Elsewhere He said, referring to Himself, "The sower went out to sow his seed" (Luke 8:5). This seed is the word of teaching.

8. Since the word of the Spirit's teaching is analogous with seed, this seed must also have a harvest, brought about through faith. Once more the Lord Himself showed this by saying to His disciples, when large numbers of people began coming to faith in Him, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal" (John 4:35–36). When ears of wheat are dried out by the visible sun, they lose their moist green colour and become white, ready for harvesting and gathering. In the same way, when in those days the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2) visited the earth in the flesh, men's souls were purified and became white through the power of His coming. The darkness and confusion caused by a life wasted in self-indulgence were transformed, and they were ready to be harvested spiritually, to be cut off more completely from godlessness and lack of faith, and gathered through true faith into everlasting life.

9. Anyone wishing to understand the truth of the fact that in those days the power of our Lord Jesus Christ's coming made men's hearts whiter, purer and ready to believe in God and worship Him, should reflect that in those days not all nations confessed one God, the Lord and Maker of all, but venerated the sun, moon, stars, and other created objects and their images as gods. However, the might of Christ's presence on earth moved everyone to acknowledge one God, Master and Creator of all. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses, with the law he was given, were able to convince only the Jewish race to honour one God, and could not even completely win over that nation, although the divine teaching had been handed down to them from their forebears. The power of the Lord's advent, by contrast, accomplished this for all races and nations, and the fields became ripe for spiritual harvesting. Those from every nation who believed that there was one universal Creator came readily to Christ and to the true religion[405] of those who had listened with understanding to the prophetic and apostolic preaching and had searched the Scriptures.

10. Simply by appearing on earth, Christ lifted the whole human race out of the deception of idolatry, though He did not make them all godly. Likewise in the age to come, the force of His second coming will raise everyone from the dead, but not all will be counted worthy of true life.[406] Ungodly and irreligious people, and those who remained unconfessed and unrepentant in this life, have not received forgiveness. They neither restrained themselves, nor cleansed themselves, from the flesh's immoderate desires: eating and drinking too much,[407] drunkenness and self-indulgence, which give rise to the passionate, sensual excesses of effeminacy, fornication, adultery and all types of shameless behaviour. These in their turn produce a desire for foul conversation,[408] adornments and cosmetics,[409] which entail expenditure, and make those in their grip dishonest, covetous, unjust and extortionate. I hardly need mention the hatred they cause, the conflicts, and the countless swarm of dishonourable passions and thoughts within the soul. Those who neither held back from these evils nor found forgiveness with God through confession and repentance will indeed be resurrected, but will be subjected to a life worse than death. They will be handed over to eternal suffering, distress, affliction and shame, in the company of unsleeping worms, burning in dark, unquenchable fire. As the prophet Isaiah said, "The lawless and the sinners will burn together, and none shall quench them" (*cf.* Isa. 1:31 LXX).

11. That is why the apostle told the Ephesians, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:5). By way of emphasis, and to silence those who taught differently, he went on, "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them" (Eph. 5:6–7). In the same vein he wrote to the Corinthians, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men,[410] nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9–10).

12. On the other hand, those who have a right faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who show their faith through works and are prudent, or else cleanse themselves through repentance and confession from the stains of the sins we have mentioned and perform their opposite virtues, self-control, chastity, love, almsgiving, justice and truth, will

all rise again to hear from the heavenly King Himself, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). Having inherited an unshakable heavenly kingdom, they will reign with Christ and live for ever in indescribable light which has no evening and is never interrupted by night. They will be in the company of all the saints from all the ages in inexpressible bliss, in Abraham's bosom, "whence all pain and sorrow and sighing have fled away".[411]

13. There is one harvest of inanimate ears of wheat, and one harvest, as we have mentioned, of reasonable wheat, the race of men, which cuts away from unbelief those who accept the preaching of the gospel, and gathers them into faith. The Reapers are the Lord's apostles and their successors, the Church teachers in every age. Christ was referring to them when He said above, "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal" (John 4:36). Godly teachers will also receive this reward from God, because they lead believers to eternal life. On the other hand, the transition of each of us through death from this life into the life to come is a different harvest, and in this case the Reapers are not the apostles but the angels. They have more to do than the apostles, in that after the harvest they pick out and separate the wicked from the good as weeds are separated from wheat. They escort the righteous to the kingdom of heaven, and cast the wicked into fiery hell. This too can be proved from the gospel of Christ, if He gives me time and utterance on another occasion.

14. May we, who are now God's chosen people, a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9, *cf.* Exod. 19:6), the Church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15), separated from all the ungodly and disbelievers, be set apart from the weeds in the age to come, and join those who are saved, in Christ Himself our Lord, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

HOMILY TWENTY-SEVEN

Another Homily Delivered at Harvest Time[412]

INCLUDING THE SUBJECT OF THE FUTURE HARVEST OF MEN

"THE WORD THAT I HAVE SPOKEN, the same shall judge him", says the Lord in the Gospels (John 12:48). This is the word which we proclaim to you, brethren. Let none of you listen to what I say as speech melting away into the air, but as a lasting word that will bring salvation to those who believe and act accordingly.[413] As for those who reject it and do the opposite, it will stand in accusation against them before that horrific judgment-seat to come. In the same way as each of us has a house, family, land, and perhaps a vineyard, as well as animals, money and various possessions, so God in His love for mankind has us in place of all these things. We are God's house, says the apostle, if we hold fast the confession and pride in our hope firm to the end (*cf.* Heb. 3:6, 1 Pet. 4:17), showing our piety through confessing our faith, and our godly way of life through speaking without shame of our hope. Similarly, God said through the prophet, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:45), and John, Christ's beloved disciple, told us, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (*cf.* 1 John 3:2–3). We are, and always shall be, the dwelling of Him who said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God" (2 Cor. 6:16, *cf.* Lev. 26:11–12, Ezek. 37:27), provided our piety is accompanied by a pure life. If, on the other hand, we live wrongly and do not repent, we shall hear Him say, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38), and we shall be abandoned, to quote Scripture again, "as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers" (Isa. 1:8), which, once the season when it is needed has passed, has no further use.

2. The Lord Himself tells us that He sees us as His family, saying, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12:50). Notice what procures this sublime kinship for us: it is living virtuously in a way pleasing to God, and acting according to His commandments, for that is the will of the Father above. But anyone who does not do the heavenly Father's will, far from having any relationship with Him, is a descendant of the enemy. That is why the Lord told the Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). And when they said they were children of Abraham, He replied, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39).

3. According to Isaiah, "the house of Israel", meaning all who accept true piety, are "the vineyard of the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 5:7). When this vineyard bears fruit pleasing to God, He takes care of it and tends it. If, however, instead of grapes it produces thorns, the deadly barbs of sins, it is left neglected, set before the wild beasts, that is, the evil demons, to be trodden underfoot, and delivered up to the fire to be burnt. For this reason, when the Lord said to His disciples, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:5, 1), He continued, "Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit: and every one that beareth not fruit is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned" (*cf.* John 15:2, 6). The fact that our Creator also regards us as his flock is clear from His words to the leader of the pre-eminent company of the apostles: "Peter, lovest thou me? Tend my lambs, tend my sheep" (*cf.* John 21:15–17). For "all we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6), and have been lost like a silver coin fallen from the master's hand (*cf.* Luke 15:8–10). But the Good Shepherd came (John 10:11), our natural Master; He sought, found and saved us, and united us to Himself in a way surpassing words.

4. Brethren, let us follow Christ, the Good Shepherd, who leads us into the pastures and folds of eternal life. Let us retain His image and likeness through living virtuously, that we may not fall from His life-giving hand. By means of good works let us bear fruit for Him, that we may be the Lord of hosts' vineyard, newly-planted and beloved.

Let us do the "good, acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2), that we may have Him as our Father. Let us cleanse ourselves "from all defilement of flesh and spirit" (2 Cor. 7:1), that we may be called the house of God, who not only has the human race as His vineyard and dwelling, but also as His field and arable land. "The kingdom of heaven", it says, "is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way" (Matt. 13:24–25).

5. It is appropriate that my homily should refer to this parable, for it provides a way for me to settle my debt and fulfil the promise I made to your charity in my last address.[414] When I was teaching you about the reasonable and spiritual harvest, I pointed out that the reapers of that harvest of the spirit, which is the transformation from unbelief to faith, were the holy apostles and the religious teachers who succeeded them in every generation down to our own. However, in the case of the reasonable harvest, which is the transition of each one of us from this life to the life to come, I said that the reapers were God's holy angels, who have more to do than the apostles, for after harvesting they sort out and separate the good from the wicked. The righteous they escort into God's kingdom, but they cast the wicked into hell-fire.

6. I mentioned this before without explaining, and promised that I would set out the evidence when God gave me utterance and opportunity, which this parable of the Lord will now conveniently provide. "When the Lord's servants", it says, "saw the tares in his field, they said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. In the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them into bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (*cf.* Matt. 13:27–30).

7. The tares, as the Lord tells us, are the sons of the evil one. Due to the fact that their deeds resemble his, they bear his mark and are always his offspring and adopted children. Harvest time is when this world ends, because although the process of harvesting started long ago and is active today through death, it will be fully completed then. The reapers are angels because they are servants of the heavenly King, especially on that occasion. "As therefore", it says, "the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man" – who is the Son of the

heavenly Father – "shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend" (Matt. 13:40–41). Our Lord Jesus Christ, as God, is Master of everything and King of both heaven and earth and what is above the heavens. Having, however, become man for our sake, destroyed the devil who had deceitfully enslaved our race, ransomed us through Himself and presented us to His own Father, He has the human race, and more especially the holy Church, drawn from all nations, as His kingdom.

8. So, "He shall send forth his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (Matt. 13:41), meaning heretics and those who do not give up sinful actions through repentance – for all sin is iniquity. When the angels have collected them, "they shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:42). Do you see, brethren, what a truly terrifying and dreadful harvest and separation this is? We were right to say that the angels were the reapers of this harvest, and that they had to do more than the apostles. When the Lord's servants, God's angels, saw the tares in the field, that is to say, godless and evil people living alongside the good, and sharing in the life of Christ's Church, they said to the Lord, "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" (Matt. 13:28), in other words, Shall we remove them from the earth through death? The Lord, however, replied, "Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them" (Matt. 13:29).

9. If they had collected the tares, given the fact that they would have separated out the evil from the just even if they had cut them down together through death, how could wheat, good people, have been uprooted too? Many impious and sinful people, living alongside those who are godly and righteous, eventually change by means of repentance, learn to be pious and virtuous, and become wheat instead of tares. So if they were carried off by the angels before they repented, wheat would be uprooted when the tares were gathered.[415] Again, many evil people have children or grandchildren with good tendencies. That is why He who knows all things before they come to pass did not allow the weeds to be pulled out before their time. "In the time of harvest", He said, "I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matt. 13:30).

10. This is exactly what the Lord says in another parable: "When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 22:11–13). As in the first parable the tares were growing together with the good seed, so here someone clothed in the spoilt and dirty garment of sin was sitting down to eat with people wearing the bridal robe of good works. In the earlier passage the Lord commanded that the tares be bundled up first, then thrown into the fire. Now He first orders that the man be bound hand and foot, then that he be cast into outer darkness. In both cases, He adds that there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, so hell-fire must be the same as outer darkness.

11. As that darkness is without any gleam of light, why is it not called "innermost" darkness rather than "outer"? God is the true, eternal light without evening, where the spirits of the just are now, and later the saints will dwell bodily. He is the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2). People who live impure, unjust lives are outside this Sun and its light even now, but in this life they do have the hope of repentance, and enjoy the light of the visible sun and the consolation of the rest of God's creation, while the Lord in His love for mankind forbears, patiently awaiting their conversion. However, any who do not repent here will be deprived then of God's tolerance and long-suffering, and the pleasure of His visible creation. They will find themselves much further away from God, bereft of hope, and will be handed over to eternal punishment. So they are without the true light now, but then, as we have said, they will be even further removed from it and will be delivered up to that darkness far outside the light, to unmitigated suffering and anguish. As the apostle says, "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (*cf.* Rom. 2:4–5).

12. Who will withstand the Lord's anger? Who will endure the accusation and shame which the Lord indicated to us in the Gospel through His words in the parable to the man wearing sin's ugly garb? "How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment" (Matt. 22:12), virtue's grace-filled apparel? The man was speechless, unable to open his

mouth. Who will be able to bear that wrathful divine sentence, of the angels' violent haste to carry it out, as they snatch the condemned man from the company of the righteous, separating him as tares from wheat, bind him without mercy and thrust him, alas, into hell? Who can endure that outer darkness for ever without light, the unceasing inconsolable turmoil of extreme grief, the gnashing and grinding of teeth, the continuous unbearable pain of being burned by the unquenchable fire? What sort of fire is that which burns physical beings and bodiless spirits, causing hurt while keeping them alive for ever, and which melts the fiery element of our own bodies, according to the words of Scripture: "The elements shall melt with fervent heat" (2 Pet. 3:12)? How much worse will the agony be because there is no hope of deliverance! Nor shall we see to what level of evil we have sunk, for that fire is completely without light.

13. This harvest has the same meaning as the threshing-floor which, as His Forerunner the Baptist taught, Christ will cleanse, holding His winnowing fan in His hand, He will gather the wheat into His granary and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Matt. 3:12). The Baptist called the angelic powers a winnowing fan in Christ's hand because this is the instrument used to separate grain from chaff. When it is in the farmer's hands it moves wherever and however he wills, and the same is true of the angels who are in the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ and under His authority, and go as and where He wishes, to fulfil His will. What the Lord spoke of as the field in the first parable is here called a threshing-floor, the place where everything collected from the field is separated out. The gathering of the tares, which He commanded, is now referred to as purging the threshing-floor. Here the tares are named chaff, because the wind carries away the lightweight, useless tares along with the husks of wheat. It may be, however, that chaff in this case symbolizes something more: that not just those who hurt their good neighbours, as tares harm the wheat among which they grow, deserve the fire, but also those who, although not harmful to others, are unstable and, because they bear no fruit, useless to themselves. The furnace of fire mentioned previously is here called unquenchable fire, to show that future punishment endures without end for those who, in their lack of practical virtue and their impassioned, sinful way of life, are likened to chaff and tares. The granary here has the same meaning as the kingdom of God in the earlier parable. "Then shall the righteous", it says, "shine

forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). Why are the words "in the kingdom of their Father" used instead of "in the kingdom of God"? To make it clear that a person first becomes a son of God, worthy to call God his Father, then afterwards rightly becomes an heir of His kingdom. How can someone become God's son? By acting as He does.[416] That is why, when the Jews told the Lord they were Abraham's children, He replied, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). Again, when they said, "We have one Father, even God", He told them, "If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:41–42, 44).

14. Take note that on account of evil longings and actions we are adopted by the devil and so become heirs of eternal fire. In the same way, by means of good desires and deeds we become like God and are made His sons and heirs of His kingdom. To make it clear that virtue means being like God, the Lord said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:34, 14–15). Also, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29). Again, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36), and, "Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35).

15. The person who, in his love and other virtues, resembles God, has God as his Father on account of his actions, and will be an heir of His kingdom. But anyone deprived of this kingdom does not just fail to obtain it, but is consigned to that darkness with no glimmer of light, which burns unbearably without ceasing. Anyone wanting to be saved from this endless punishment and to inherit God's eternal kingdom should be neither a tare, an evil, harmful seed damaging the bodies and souls of all who draw near, and an abominable example of wicked acts and words; nor a stalk or chaff, lightweight and easily tossed about by the words and attacks of the evil spirit, and also so useless that it is used to feed animal passions and demons. Let him be wheat, abstaining from all pointless and evil works and words, active in their opposite

virtues, and bearing the fruits of repentance (*cf.* Luke 3:8). Then will he be worthy of the heavenly granary, called the son of the heavenly Father, and enter rejoicing into His kingdom as an heir, illumined with the divine glory.

16. May we all attain to this by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belongs glory, together with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY TWENTY-EIGHT

Delivered on the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul Leaders of the Apostles[417]

THE COMMEMORATION of each of the saints on the appointed feastday is an occasion for town and country, citizens and their rulers to share in rejoicing, and brings great benefit to all who celebrate. "The memory of the just is praised", says the wise Solomon (Prov. 10:7 Lxx), "When the righteous is praised the people will rejoice" (*cf.* Prov. 29:2 Lxx). If a lamp is lit at night, its light shines for the service and enjoyment of everyone present. Similarly, through such commemorations, each saint's God-pleasing course, his blessed end, and the grace bestowed on him by God, because of the purity of his life, bring spiritual joy and benefit to the whole congregation, like a bright flaming torch set in our midst. When the land bears a good harvest everyone rejoices, not just the farmers (for we all benefit from the earth's produce); so the fruits which the saints bring forth for God through their virtue delight not only the Husbandman of souls, but all of us, being set before us for the common good and pleasure of our souls. During their earthly lives, all the saints are an incentive to virtue for those who hear and see them with understanding, for they are human icons of excellence, animated pillars of goodness, and living books, which teach us the way to better things. Afterwards, when they depart this life, the benefit we gain from them is kept alive for ever through the remembrance of their virtues. By commemorating their noble deeds, we offer them that praise which, on the one hand, we owe them for the good they did our ancestors, but which, on the other, is also fitting for us at the present time, on account of the help they give us now.

2. When we call to mind what they accomplished, we add nothing to their good deeds. How could we, given that we are not even competent to depict their virtue as it really is? For the sake of the sublime rewards promised by God, they strove honourably to the limit of human nature and showed us a way of life that was equally sublime. We certainly do not augment their treasures by praising them – not at all! But we do increase their bounty to us by looking up towards them as lanterns aglow with divine light, and by understanding better and welcoming the beautifying power[418] which comes from them.

3. If, as we have said, we commemorate each of the saints with hymns and appropriate songs of praise, how much more should we celebrate the memory of Peter and Paul, the supreme leaders of the pre-eminent company of the apostles? They are the fathers and guides of all Christians: apostles, martyrs, holy ascetics, priests, hierarchs, pastors and teachers. As chief shepherds and master builders of our common godliness and virtue, they tend and teach us all, like lights in the world, holding forth the word of life (Phil. 2:15–16). Their brightness excels that of the other radiantly pious and virtuous saints as the sun outshines the stars, or as the heavens, which declare the sublime glory of God (*cf.* Ps. 19:1), transcend the skies. In their order and strength they are greater than the heavens, more beautiful than the stars, and swifter than both, and as regards what lies beyond the realm of the senses,[419] it is they who reveal things which surpass the very heavens themselves and indeed the whole universe, and who make them bright with the light "in which there is no variableness neither shadow of turning" (*cf.* Jas. 1:17). Not only do they bring people out of darkness into this wonderful light, but by enlightening them they make them light, the offspring of the perfect light, that each of them may shine like the sun (Matt. 13:43), when the author of light, the God-man and Word, appears in glory.

4. The appearance to us this day of both these luminaries together brightens the Church, for their meeting produces a wealth of light, not an eclipse. It is not the case that one has a higher orbit and is placed above, while the other is lower down and passes under his shadow. Nor does one rule the day, the other the night, such that one would overshadow the other if they appeared opposite each other. Light is not produced by one and received by the other in such a way that the

latter's radiance would vary sometimes depending on the distance between them. Rather, both share equally in Christ, the everlasting source of eternal light, and have attained to the same height, glory and radiance. That is why the coming together of these lights signifies their solidarity and support for one another and illuminates the souls of the faithful twice over.

5. The first traitor, who incited the first man to desert God, saw Him who had earlier made Adam, the father of the human race, later re-creating Peter as the father of all true worshippers. He not only saw, but also heard the Creator saying to Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Once the prince of evil found this out, being the epitome of wicked envy, he tempted Peter, the first leader of God's faithful people, as he had previously tempted Adam, the founder of the race of men. Realizing that Peter was endowed with intelligence and afire with love for Christ, he did not dare make a direct attack. Instead he came upon him from the right flank,[420] cunningly deceiving him into being excessively eager. At the time of the saving passion, when the Lord told His disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night" (Matt. 26:31), Peter disobediently contradicted Him. He also exalted himself above the others, saying that even if everyone else were offended, he would not be (Matt. 26:33). Because he had been beguiled into arrogance, he fell[421] further than the rest, so that by humbling himself more than them he might eventually appear more radiant. Unlike Adam who was tempted, vanquished and completely brought down, Peter, having been tempted and led astray a little, overcame the tempter. How? Through his immediate condemnation of himself, his intense sorrow and repentance,[422] and the medicine which brings forgiveness, tears. "A broken and contrite heart", it says, "O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17), and "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Cor. 7:10), and "They that sow their supplications in tears shall joyfully reap forgiveness" (*cf.* Ps. 126:5).

6. Anyone who looks at Peter will see that through repentance and painful grief he not only adequately healed the denial into which he had been drawn, but he also completely rooted out of his soul that passion which had made him fall behind the others. Wishing to demonstrate this to everyone, the Lord, after His passion in the flesh for our sake and His rising on the third day, used those words to Peter which we read in today's Gospel,[423] asking him, "Simon, son of Jonah,

lovest thou me more than these" (John 21:15), meaning, "more than these disciples of mine". But see how much humbler he has become. Whereas before, even without being asked, he set himself above the rest and said that even if all forsook the Lord, he would not; now, on being asked whether he loves Him more than the others do, he affirms that he loves Him, but leaves out the word "more", saying "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:15, 16, *cf.* 17).

7. What does the Lord do? Since Peter has shown that he has not lost his love for Him and has now acquired humility as well, He openly fulfils the promise made long before and tells him, "Feed my lambs" (John 21:15). When He was referring to the company of believers as a building, He promised to make Peter the foundation stone, saying, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). On the other hand, when He was talking in terms of fishing, He made him a fisher of men with the words, "From henceforth thou shalt catch men" (Luke 5:10). But when He speaks of His disciples as sheep, He sets Peter over them as a shepherd, saying, "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17). It is clear from this that the Lord's desire for us to be saved is so great, that He asks of those who love Him only one thing: to lead us to the pasture and fold of salvation.

8. Let us long to be saved, and obey those who lead us in that direction through their words and deeds. As long as each of us wishes to take the road leading to salvation, the teacher,[424] prepared by our common Saviour, is at hand, together with the giver of salvation, who, in His overwhelming love for mankind, is more than ready without being called or beseeched. Christ asks Peter three times so that three times he can reply affirming his faith, thus healing his threefold denial with his threefold confession. Thrice Christ appoints him over His sheep and lambs, placing under him the three categories of those being saved: slaves, hirelings and sons,[425] or, alternatively, virgins, chaste widows[426] and those honourably married. But when Peter was asked again and again if he loved Christ, the Scripture tells us he was grieved by the repeated questioning (John 21:17), supposing that the Lord did not believe him. Knowing that he loved Christ, aware that his questioner knew him better than he knew himself, and feeling under pressure, Peter not only confessed that he loved Him, but also proclaimed that the Lord he loved was "God over all" (Rom. 9:5), by saying, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee", because only "God who is over all" is all-knowing.

9. Once Peter had made this heartfelt confession, the Lord ordained him shepherd and chief pastor of His whole Church, and also promised to encompass him with such strength, that he who previously was unable even to stand being spoken to and questioned by a young girl (John 18:17), would endure unto death, even death on a cross. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast younger", both physically and spiritually, "thou girdest thyself", meaning, you used your own strength, "and walkest whither thou wouldest", doing what you liked and living according to your natural inclinations. "But when thou shalt be old", having reached the peak of your physical and spiritual age, "thou shalt stretch forth thy hands". With these words, Christ indicates that Peter will die on a cross, and bears witness that his crucifixion will not be involuntary. "Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee", meaning strengthen, "and carry thee whither thou wouldest not", that is to say, out of this life (*cf.* John 21:18). Our nature is unwilling to be dissolved in death,[427] and Peter's superhuman martyrdom also demonstrates our attitude as human beings to life. "*Strengthened by Me*", Christ tells him, "you will willingly endure all these things for my sake and bear witness to me; for the desire to do so is not natural but supernatural to human nature".[428]

10. Peter was the sort of man who can be described in a few words. As for Paul, on the other hand, what tongue – or how many and what sort of tongues – can depict even to a limited extent his endurance unto death for Christ's sake? He was put to death every day, or rather he was always dead, no longer alive himself, as he tells us, but having Christ living in him (Gal. 2:20). For love of Christ he not only counted everything in the present world as dung (Phil. 3:8), but even put things to come in second place compared to the Lord. "For I am persuaded", he says, "that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (*cf.* Rom. 8:38–39). He had zeal for God, and was jealous over us with divine jealousy (2 Cor. 11:2). The only one to equal him in this was Peter, but hear how humble he is when he says of himself, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle" (1 Cor. 15:9).

11. Given that Paul made the same confession of faith as Peter, and had the same zeal, humility and love, surely they received the same rewards from Him who measures everything with completely just scales, yardstick and plumbline. Anything else would be unrea-

sonable. That is why the Lord told Peter, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18), whereas He said to Ananias of Paul, "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings" (Acts 9:15). Which name? Clearly the name we have been given, the name of Christ's Church, which rests on the foundation stone of Peter. Notice that Peter and Paul are equal in prominence and glory, and both hold up the Church.[429] Consequently the Church now bestows one and the same honour on both, and celebrates them together with equal esteem. As we consider the outcome of their lives, let us imitate how they lived, or at least how they were restored through humility and repentance, even if we cannot attain to their other great and exalted achievements, which are appropriate to great men and fitting for great men to emulate. In fact, some aspects of their lives are probably impossible for anyone to imitate. Amendment through repentance, however, is more appropriate for us than for the great, since we all sin many times every day, and unless we lay hold of salvation through continuous repentance, we have no hope of it from any other source.

12. Repentance is preceded by awareness of our sins, which is a strong incentive to mercy. "Have mercy upon me", said the psalmist and prophet to God, "for I acknowledge my transgressions" (Ps. 51:1, 3). Through his recognition of sin he attracted God's compassion, and through his confession and self-condemnation[430] he obtained complete forgiveness. "I said", the psalmist tells us, "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my heart" (*cf.* Ps. 32:5), because acknowledgment of our sins is followed by condemnation of ourselves, which in turn is followed by that sorrow for our sins which Paul calls "godly sorrow" (2 Cor. 7:10). After godly sorrow confession and prayer to God with a contrite heart come naturally (Ps. 51:17), as does the promise to keep away from evil from now on. This is repentance.

13. This is how Manasseh escaped being punished for his sins, even though he had fallen into many great and serious transgressions, and wallowed in them for years on end (2 Chr. 33:1–20). As for David, the Lord set aside his sin because of his repentance, nor did he deprive him of his prophetic gift. When Peter resorted to repentance, he not only recovered from his fall and obtained forgiveness, but was also appointed to protect Christ's Church. As you see, Paul too was rewarded with this rôle after his conversion, once he had made progress and become more closely God's own than the others.

Repentance which is true and truly from the heart persuades the penitent not to sin any more, not to mix with corrupt people, and not to gape in curiosity at evil pleasures, but to despise things present, cling to things to come, struggle against passions, seek after virtues, be self-controlled in every respect,[431] keep vigil with prayers to God, and shun dishonest gain. It convinces him to be merciful to those who wrong him, gracious to those who ask something of him, ready with all his heart to bend down and help in any way he can, whether by words, actions or money, all who seek his assistance, that through kindness to his fellow-man he might gain God's love in return for loving his neighbour, draw the divine favour to himself, and attain to eternal mercy and God's everlasting blessing and grace.

14. May we all attain to this by the grace of the only-begotten Son of God, to whom belong all glory, might, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY TWENTY-NINE

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE PARALYSED MAN WHO ACCORDING TO MATTHEW THE EVANGELIST WAS HEALED IN CAPERNAUM[432]

ALSO ON GODLY SORROW[433]

FOR MANY REASONS the Gospels can be seen as resembling a honeycomb. According to the Song of Songs, the "taste"[434] of our souls' spiritual bridegroom, who is fairer in beauty than the sons of men (*cf.* Ps. 45:2), is "sweet" and "altogether desirable" (S. of S. 5:16; *cf.* 2:3).[435] To the soul betrothed to Him, on the other hand, the Songwriter says through the immortal Spirit of wisdom, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue" (S. of S. 4:11). Clearly all the evangelists are like this: their words convey a story which can be compared to the wax of the honeycomb, and their deeper moral meaning, contained within or openly set forth by them, can be likened to honey and milk, since it is appropriate not just to the perfect, but also to the imperfect as spiritual milk (1 Pet. 2:2). The Song refers to the lips of the spiritual bride shedding drops, rather than pouring forth abundantly, when she regards the boundless depth of the bridegroom's wisdom and power, and all they have accomplished, because, "The things which Jesus did, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written", as the greatest theologian among the evangelists tells us (*cf.* John 21:25).

2. For us, however, even these drops are fathomless ocean depths. We have already expounded to your charity the miracle of the paralysed

man when it was read in church from Mark's Gospel (Mark 2:1–12),[436] and nourished your souls with the grace it contains. But now that we hear the miracle recounted by Matthew (Matt. 9:1–8), we shall examine it and find once more a great abundance of spiritual food, or rather, we shall discover a little more of the hidden treasure. This small portion will be enough and more than enough for everyone, and, like those loaves with which the Lord fed the multitudes in the wilderness, will increase as it is shared (Matt. 14:19–20). On that earlier occasion, I set before you a meal of honey in the comb,[437] relating the basic story along with intimations of its more subtle, ethical content. Today, by contrast, I shall squeeze out as much honey as time allows, and serve it to all of you gathered here for the spiritual feast.

3. "At that time,[438] Jesus entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed" (Matt. 9:1–2). At this point in our earlier homily we explained that the paralyzed man was not the same one who, according to John, was healed in Jerusalem (John 5:1–15),[439] that Jesus' own city was Capernaum, and why this is the only town called His own.[440] We also gave you, our spiritual guests, a taste of the hidden honey, and made the story into an allegorical lesson in virtue by pointing out that the city of Jesus which He entered was this world, for, as the evangelist says, "He came unto his own" (John 1:11).[441] We added that the paralysed man is any soul that thinks of turning back to the Lord and is brought to Him by these four things: self-condemnation, confession of sins, the promise to renounce evil, and prayer to God.[442]

4. In the same vein, when we hear Matthew's words, "Jesus entered into a ship, and passed over and came into his own city" (Matt. 9:1), we can, even though the outward sense is different, interpret the account to mean that the Saviour of all assumed our nature, crossed the sea of human life, and came into His own city, that throne and dwelling-place which lies above the heavens, far above all principality, and power, and every name and honour that is known, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come (*cf.* Eph. 1:20–21). That is His true place, where none but He can enter. The psalmist indicates this by saying, "The heaven of heavens are the Lord's" (Ps. 115:16 LXX), for there really is a heavenly place which is God's own home. When the Lord reached His dwelling-place He did not lay aside our human nature. That is why the evangelist, after telling us that Jesus went into

a ship and crossed over, does not go on to say that He disembarked from the boat before entering the city, but simply states that He went into the boat, crossed over and came to His own city, entered heaven, in that same boat, meaning in a body like ours.

5. He came to the heavenly city, entered the true Holy of Holies, and sat on the right hand of the Father in our human clay, "having obtained eternal redemption for us", to quote St. Paul (Heb. 9:12). Then the apostles chose from the Gentiles those who would accept the preaching of the Truth, who were afraid and humbled by what they understood of the message they heard, but were still lying prostrate on the bed of self-indulgence,[443] feeble and paralysed, not yet having received the healing of their soul's diseases, that is to say, the forgiveness of their sins, and so incapable of using their body to do anything good. Separating these people from the others, who would not receive the preaching of repentance and godliness, the apostles, especially those four who were to write the Gospels, picked them up and brought them to Christ.

6. When Jesus, it says, saw the faith of the apostles who brought them – for they are our teachers and mediators[444] before God – for the sake of this perfect faith of theirs He graciously bestowed the adoption of sons on those who were imperfect, saying to each one carried to Him, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. 9:2). "Set aside", He says, "your anxiety over your sins, for they are forgiven. Forget your horror at the sufferings which threaten you, for you will inherit the promises, seeing you have become My child and heir." In practice this happens through holy baptism, when we are born again through the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15), receiving forgiveness of our former sins, and becoming heirs of God according to the promise (Gal. 3:29), and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

7. The scribes and Pharisees, Greeks and Jews, are doubtful about the power and grace of holy baptism in which we believe, and ask, "Who can forgive sins?" (Mark 2:7). But we whose souls and bodies used to be paralysed through sensual pleasures and passions, and incapable of doing anything good, hear the Lord saying to each of us, as to that paralysed man, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house" (Matt. 9:6). Strengthened by the grace and power of holy baptism within us, we become vigorous and active in virtue, and bring into subjection our mental and physical capabilities and those material things which ought to be subservient to them, but which

formerly overpowered us. We then go wherever pleases God and ourselves and, as far as we can, move to our real home, the eternal heavenly mansions. Those who see us ordering our lives in this godly way, marvel and glorify God, who has given such power and authority to those who believe in Him (*cf.* Matt. 9:8), that they have their citizenship in heaven while still living on earth. But when we sin after being baptized, although the grace and power of baptism remain because of the giver's love for mankind, the soul's health and purity depart.

8. That is why we who are sinners need to be sorrowful and downcast[445] again over our former sins, and to prostrate ourselves anew in repentance, that we may hear once more in a mysterious fashion those words to the paralysed man, "Son, be of good cheer", receive forgiveness and have joy in exchange for our grief. For this kind of sorrow is that spiritual honey which we suck from the barren rock, according to the Scriptural allusion, "They sucked honey out of the rock" (Deut. 32:13 LXX).[446] As Paul says, "That Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4). Do not be surprised that I refer to sorrow as honey. This is what Paul meant when he said, "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Cor. 7:10). When someone with an injured tongue is offered honey, it seems to sting, but when his wounds are healed he realizes that honey is sweet. Similarly, when the fear of God touches perceptive souls through the preaching of the gospel, it brings sorrow, as they are still covered in sin's wounds. But once they have rid themselves of these through repentance, they receive the gospel's joy instead. As the Saviour says, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John 16:20). Which sorrow? The sorrow the Lord's disciples felt at being deprived of their Master and Teacher; the suffering Peter experienced when he denied Christ; the grief of every godly person who repents of his transgressions and his slothful lack of virtue. On falling into sins we should accuse only ourselves and no one else. When Adam broke the commandment, putting the blame on Eve did not help him, nor was it any use for her to accuse the serpent (Gen. 3:12–13). God put us in charge of ourselves,[447] and our souls have been granted absolute authority over the passions, so nothing can prevail over us and force us.

9. This, then, is godly sorrow that brings salvation: to blame only ourselves, nobody else, for what we do wrong, to grieve over ourselves, and to be reconciled with God through confession of our sins and

painful remorse over them. It was Lamech in ancient times who inaugurated self-condemnation and contrition. He openly confessed his sin, passed judgment on himself and condemned himself as worse than Cain – "Cain shall be avenged seven times, Lamech seventy times seven" (Gen. 4:24). Mourning over his guilt, he escaped God's condemnation through his own agonizing remorse. As the prophet was to say later, "Declare thou thy sins first, that thou mayest be justified" (Isa. 43:26 LXX). And the apostle tells us, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:31).

10. Lamech is the first person recorded as having escaped judgment from above through repentance and sorrow for his sins, then later the Ninevites, whole cities and vast numbers of people, did the same. They had not only sinned, but had received God's sentence of condemnation, yet they had confidence that they could overturn it through repentance and painful sorrow for their sins. When Jonah proclaimed God's decision, "Yet three days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4 LXX),[448] they listened and believed. They did not, however, throw themselves down into the evil pit of despair, nor did they harden their hearts. Instead, they said among themselves, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" (Jonah 3:9ff). And each one of them turned aside from his evil course and the injustice he had committed. They proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least. Even their king sat with them repenting in sackcloth and ashes, and the babies did not suckle, since mothers apparently forgot their unweaned children in their deep mourning. As the psalmist says, "I forget to eat my bread by reason of my groaning" (Ps. 102:4–5). The animals did not graze, for it seems that herdsmen and shepherds left them shut in their folds and stalls, constrained by their profound remorse. By all joining together in the mourning that brings salvation,[449] they changed God's decision against them, put an end to His wrath, and transformed it into favour.

11. As we spend almost all our lives in sin, we too, brethren, need to choose this saving sorrow and a life of penitence. Otherwise, as the Lord says, the men of Nineveh shall condemn us at the resurrection, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah (*cf.* Matt. 12:41), whereas we did not repent at the preaching of Christ, the God of Jonah. Moreover, Jonah did not preach repentance but, as we have said, a sentence of condemnation, loss of life, catastrophe, death and utter destruction.

Christ, by contrast, came that we might have life and have it more abundantly (*cf.* John 10:10), together with adoption as God's sons and the heavenly kingdom. When Jonah proclaimed destruction he neither advised repentance nor promised the kingdom of heaven, whereas Christ preached repentance, promised the kingdom, and also foretold the inevitable destruction of everything. As in the days of Noah, He said, they were well fed and comfortable, then suddenly the flood came and took them all away, so shall the end of this world be (*cf.* Matt. 24:38–39, Luke 17:27). For the form of this world is passing away (1 Cor. 7:31).

12. In those days Jonah warned the Ninevites only of the destruction of the visible things of this world, but not of the terrifying tribunal, the unbearable Judgment following the catastrophe, the unquenchable fire, the unsleeping worms, the outer darkness, the gnashing of teeth, and inconsolable grief. The Lord, on the other hand, forewarned of all these things to come after the end of the world, and also revealed that they were in store for those who live pain-free lives here. They would not, however, happen after the space of three days, as Jonah preached, but long afterwards, because of the Master's forbearance. God's long-suffering leads you to repentance, but be careful, lest according to the hardness, insensitivity, lack of contrition, and impenitence of your heart, you treasure up for yourself wrath against the Day of the righteous Judgment and revelation of God. He will render to every man according to his deeds; for those who patiently and with a contrite heart seek the remission of sins through works of repentance, there will be comfort and joy, eternal life, and an indescribable kingdom; but for those who continue ruthlessly in their sins without repenting, there will be suffering, anguish, and unbearable, unending punishment (*cf.* Rom. 2:4–9).

13. After the Ninevites,[450] David appeared as a living monument to godly sorrow, telling of the way of salvation and painful contrition according to God's will. He put down in writing the sin he committed, the grief and repentance he showed to God, and the compassion God granted him. "I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. 32:5), he wrote, using "iniquity" to mean the root of evil, the passion resident in his soul, and "transgression" to refer to the sinful deed he had committed, which he proclaimed to all, repented of and grieved for, and then received not just forgiveness, but inner healing.

14. Let us hear him describing how he mourned continually: "For all the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning" (Ps. 73:14). All day "as one that mourneth with a sad countenance, thus I humbled myself" (*cf.* Ps. 35:14 LXX). "All the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears" (Ps. 6:6). "I am like an owl upon the house top. I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping" (Ps. 102:7, 9). "My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh is changed by reason of the want of oil" (Ps. 109:24 LXX). "I was brought low and the Lord helped me" (*cf.* Ps. 116:6). He cries out to the Lord, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O Lord" (Ps. 6:1–2), "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:3). "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and enter not into judgment with thy servant" (Ps. 143:1, 2).

15. "O come", brethren, "let us", too, "worship and fall down and weep", as David himself urges us, "before the Lord that made us" (Ps. 95:6 LXX), who has called us to repentance and to this saving sorrow, mourning and contrition.[451] Anyone devoid of this sadness has not obeyed the Lord who calls us. He is not numbered among God's saints, and will not obtain the blessedness in the gospel, nor the promised divine consolation. "Blessed are they that mourn", it says, "for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4).

16. What if someone says he is without sin and does not need to mourn? This is difficult, highly unlikely, and all but impossible. But even if we do accept that someone has his passions under control,[452] the Scriptures show us another basic reason for this sorrow that saves us. The disciples grieved when they lost Christ, their good Teacher and Saviour, and we too are deprived of Him now, and not just of Him, but of the joy of paradise. We have fallen away from its delights, and exchanged somewhere free of passions for this painful place full of them. We have forfeited direct conversation with God, the company of his angels, and eternal life. Who, aware of this deprivation, would not mourn? And anyone oblivious of it does not belong among the faithful. So we, brethren, who have found out about our loss through divinely inspired teaching, should mourn over ourselves and wash away the stains of sin through godly grief, that we may discover God's compassion, return to paradise, and be the blessed possessors of eternal life and consolation.

17. May we all attain to this by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belong all glory, might, honour and worship, together with His Father who is without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY THIRTY

On the Blind Men Who According to Matthew the Evangelist Received Their Sight in a House[453]

ALSO TEACHING THAT TRUE FAITH IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT WORKS OF REPENTANCE

WHILE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST was going about among men on earth in the body He had assumed from us for our sake, He healed many people who were physically and spiritually blind. If we consider the transition from unbelief to faith, from ignorance to the knowledge of God, as a restoration of sight to the mind, it is impossible to count how many blind people received their sight through the Lord's Incarnation. Only He who numbers the hairs of our head knows how many they were (*cf.* Matt. 10:30). If, however, we look at those whose physical eyes were healed, we shall find that they too were many. Some were healed by Christ through a word alone; others by His touch; several just by drawing near and falling down before Him; a few were anointed with spittle or clay. When Jesus drew near to the Sea of Galilee, Matthew tells us, "great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others" (Matt. 15:30), and when they cast them down at His feet He healed them, so that the crowds wondered and glorified Him when they saw the dumb speaking, the lame walking, the maimed made whole, and the blind able to see (Matt. 15:31).

2. At the time of His marvellous entry into Jerusalem, sitting upon an ass's colt, in accordance with the prophecy (Zech. 9:9, John 12:15),

and hymned by the children as God, Matthew tells us that Christ healed all the blind and lame people who came to Him (Matt. 21:7–14). When He came to Bethsaida, as Mark recounts, they brought a blind man to Him and besought Him to heal him. The Lord led him out of the town, and having spit on his eyes and put His hands upon him, He enabled him to see dimly. Then when He had put His hands on him again He gave him clear vision (Mark 8:22–26). On the other hand, when the Lord, as Luke says, drew near to Jericho, He healed the blind man sitting by the wayside begging, just with a word, saying "Receive thy sight", when the man asked for healing (Luke 18:35–43). According to Mark, as He was leaving Jericho, He restored the eyes of another blind man, Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, replying to his plea for sight with the words, "Be it unto thee according to thy faith" (Mark 10:46–52). In Jerusalem, as John relates, He saw a man who was blind from his birth, and without even being asked, moved by His own goodness, He spat on the ground and made clay, anointed the eyes of the blind man and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." And he went and washed, and came back seeing (John 9:1–7).

3. After He had raised the dead daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, to life (Matt. 9:18–26, Mark 5:22–43, and Luke 8:41–56), as we shall hear in today's reading from Matthew's Gospel (Matt. 9:27–35), "When Jesus was departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." He came into the house with them, touched their eyes, said, "According to your faith be it unto you", and healed them. Leaving aside those who cannot be enumerated, we can count six blind men who were healed. I doubt if any blind person in Judaea or the surrounding areas in those days remained sightless. That is why Isaiah, prophesying as Christ's representative, said that he was sent by the Father and His Spirit "to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind" (Isa. 61:1 LXX). Why does the prophet speak of "preaching restoration of sight",[454] rather than of "giving it", as this is what actually happened? Because the Lord's principal reason for coming to earth was not to open men's physical eyes, but the eyes of their souls, which receive their sight through the preaching of the gospel. So it was only right that the prophet should say that the Lord would preach recovery of sight to the blind.

4. The Lord Himself exhorts us to seek after spiritual things, saying, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (John 6:27), but He also

promises to provide for our bodily needs if we pursue what is good for our souls, telling us, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Luke 12:31). He acts in the same way with regard to men's sight. Having, in His love for mankind, bowed the heavens and come down to earth in order to enlighten the eyes of our souls and give sight to our understanding through preaching the gospel, He also healed physical eyes that could not see. The recovery of spiritual sight and the healing of physical blindness have much in common. Some of those whose bodily eyes were blind received their sight at once, like the man who heard and immediately saw and was healed (Mark 10:46–52, Luke 18:35–43). Others recovered their sight gradually, as in the case of the man, who, before he was completely cured, said, "I see men as trees, walking" (Mark 8:22–26). It is the same with those whose spiritual eyes were healed. Whereas some recovered instantly, such as the tax collector who immediately became an evangelist (Matt. 9:9), others were healed in stages, like Nicodemus, the disciple who came to Jesus by night (John 3:2ff).

5. Some physically blind people, like Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46–52), found healing just by a word, some by means of an action. The Lord applied His own spittle to the eyes of the man near Bethsaida, who, it seems, had eyes and lids, but empty ones. The moisture of his eyes had disappeared and was restored by the divine saliva (Mark 8:23). On the other hand, the man born blind did not have eyes or lids and needed them to be created out of earth, which was achieved through the clay the Lord mixed with His fingers (John 9:6). Just as some people, as I have mentioned, were cured of their physical blindness by a word alone and others by an action, so some of those who received healing for the eyes of their souls, by which I mean those who were transformed from unbelievers into believers, needed miracles in order to believe. Such were those sent by John to ask, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another" (Matt. 11:3). Others, by contrast, regained their spiritual sight by a word alone, believing just by hearing, among them the centurion whose faith the Lord declared to be greater than Israel's (Matt. 8:10).

6. The blind men who received their bodily sight from Christ in the passage of Matthew's Gospel read today were in this latter category. They apparently believed even before they were healed, and as they were blind they must have believed from hearsay. "When Jesus departed thence", it says, "two blind men followed him, crying,

and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us" (Matt. 9:27). How could they have followed Him, or how could they have cried out as they did, asking for such a great mercy as the restoration of blind eyes, unless they believed? But the sequel also shows the blind men's faith. "When Jesus", it says, "departed thence." Whence? And why does the evangelist put this in, not just here but a little earlier as well? "As Jesus passed forth from thence", he says, "he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom" (Matt. 9:9), the man in question being the evangelist himself, who was transformed by a word at that point. It is my opinion that the evangelist speaks in this way so as to give thoughtful hearers an opportunity to interpret the events he relates in a figurative way as well. Anyone examining this account carefully will see that it gives a succinct outline of the whole dispensation of the Lord's incarnation and wisely and wonderfully makes it known.

7. The Lord definitely had somewhere to stay in Capernaum, since it says, "He dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast" (Matt. 4:13). But clearly this dwelling-place symbolizes heaven, as it bears within it the Inhabitant of heaven. That is why the Lord says elsewhere, "Thou Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven" (Luke 10:15). As the Lord set out from that city, so He left heaven by assuming flesh. If you consider His departure from heaven, you will find that as He went out thence He chose the apostles, and healed the impure proclivity of human nature.[455] On the other hand, if you think of His departure from the house in Capernaum, you will see that His actions represent these same events. It was when He passed by that He turned Matthew into an apostle from being a tax collector, and healed the woman with the issue of blood (Matt. 9:20). He went as far as Jairus' daughter who had died, and by bringing her back to life showed Himself victorious over death (Matt. 9:18–26). Then He returned whence He had come.

8. As He passed a second time along the same road on His return, He opened the eyes of the blind men who had followed Him, just as, having gone down to death and destroyed the power of death through His resurrection, it is written that, as He passed by on His way back, He opened His disciples' minds that they might understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). They then went out and proclaimed Him all over the world, just as the evangelist tells us that the blind men whose sight was restored, "when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country" (Matt. 9:31). Did you notice that this

account contains a clear outline of almost the whole of God's plan for our salvation through His becoming man? That is why the phrase, "as he passed forth from thence", appears twice (Matt. 9:9, 27), so that we might understand that these words refer to His departure and His return. And it is in imitation of this departure and return that the priest leaves the sanctuary, goes down to the far end of the church, then returns to the place he left.[456]

9. As He passed by on His way back, two blind men followed Him, representing the two nations of Jews and Gentiles. They were crying out, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us" (Matt. 9:27), showing Him to be the one expected and spoken of by the prophets. To symbolize perfectly His divine plan, and to try out the blind men's faith as well as making it known, He went by them without saying anything until He entered the house from which He had set off originally. Then He asked them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?", and they replied, "Yea, Lord" (Matt. 9:28). He did not put this question because He was unaware of their faith, but to reveal it to those who were ignorant of it. That is also why He added, on touching their eyes, "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29). Their eyes were opened, bearing witness both to the fact that they believed and also that He was, as they believed Him to be, both God and man. As man, the Son of David, He touched their eyes with His hands and spoke in an inaudible voice. As God, the Creator of light, He gave light to their darkened eyes.

10. As it was not yet time for Him to be manifested to all, since that was reserved for after His passion and resurrection from the dead, "Jesus straightly charged them", it says, "saying, See that no man know it" (Matt. 9:30), giving them strict orders to keep the matter quiet. "But they", it says, "when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country" (Matt. 9:31). Apparently, if they had not been told to keep silent, they would have declared His power all over the world. As they were given orders, however, they refrained from going far afield, but could not bear not to preach in the immediate vicinity. So the blind men who had followed Christ received perfect enlightenment not only of their bodies, but also of their souls.

11. Let us too, brethren, follow the light which illumines both soul and body. Let us make our way towards His brilliance, and "let us walk honestly as in the day of the Lord" (*cf.* Rom. 13:13). Let us glorify Him with good works, and cause those that see us to give Him glory

(*cf.* Matt. 5:16). Let us flee from the darkness which is opposed to the light, that is, the devil, the patron of sin. As the Sun of all righteousness, integrity, peace, compassion, long-suffering, love, and all the virtues, this light makes those who devote themselves to Him partakers of the light. The opposing darkness, however, being evil, makes those who approach it immoral, adulterous, malicious, merciless, disorderly, rapacious, and full of all kinds of wickedness. How do you think we can distinguish between believers and unbelievers, the illuminated and the unenlightened, that is to say, between those baptized as Christians and belonging to Christ, and those who are unbaptized and in the devil's ranks? Is it not by their words? Is it not by their deeds? Is it not by their ways?

12. So if someone speaks, acts, and behaves exactly like the unbaptized,[457] even though he says he has received baptism in Christ, it is obvious that he belongs among that group of people of whom the apostle said, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). With whom do you think we should rank such people who simultaneously confess and deny God? With the believers? But they disown God by their actions. With the unbelievers? But their tongues profess their faith. This is truly an extraordinarily difficult dilemma to resolve. The psalmist and prophet, however, had already found the answer to the problem, saying, "Thou, O Lord, renderest to every man according to his work" (Ps. 62:12). The Lord Himself made it clear that anyone who heard His sayings and did not do them was a fool (Matt. 7:26). Paul, the apostle called from heaven, said, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, the Lord will render eternal life: but tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil" (*cf.* Rom. 2:6–9). Also, "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13). And, "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest God" (Rom. 2:23).

13. Paul told the Jews that "Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision" (Rom. 2:25), so it is not at all out of keeping for me to say to you that faith is profitable, if you behave conscientiously, purify yourself through confession and repentance, and put into practice the undertakings made to God at baptism. But if you disobey your conscience and set aside your promises, your faith becomes unbelief. Why do we believe that, having been baptized, we

shall be saved? Clearly because we have heard the Lord saying, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Since He who is the Truth spoke of these two things, believing and being baptized, it is impossible for anyone who does not want to be baptized to be saved, even if he says he believes. Nor can someone who does not believe be saved, even if he has been baptized. Perhaps somebody will say that everyone who has been baptized believes? He will hear from the apostle, "Show me thy faith by means of thy works" (*cf.* Jas. 2:18). That is why the Lord links faith with holy baptism, uniting, by means of faith, the keeping of His commandments with baptism. He said first to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), then He continues, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

14. What does the Lord tell us in the gospel preached by His messengers, and what must those who obey it believe? That whoever has Christ's commandments, and acts upon them and keeps them, he it is who loves Christ (*cf.* John 14:21). That salvation is obtained through patience (*cf.* Rom. 15:4; Luke 21:19), and the strait and narrow way of life (*cf.* Matt. 7:14). That unless our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (*cf.* Matt. 5:20). These are the teachings Christ commanded His disciples to proclaim.

15. A believer is a person who strives to keep the divine commandments. But anyone who does not try to keep them, and does not consider it a loss to fail to do so, will not stand among the baptized, even if he says he has received baptism. "The Lord of that servant shall cut him asunder", it says, "and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites" (Matt. 24:50, 51). So far, this is set before us as a threat, since the Lord, in His love for mankind, waits for us to repent. But He has cut the Jews asunder, as a lesson to us. Instead of kinsmen with Himself and with Abraham, He made them strangers, telling them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). And, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). Everybody knows they were of Abraham's race. So if acting and behaving in an alien way can annul physical family ties and deprive sons according to blood of their sonship, how can our dissimilarity to the Lord in our works and way of life fail to alienate us, who are not of the same race as Christ

according to the flesh, from our adoption as God's sons, and put us on the enemy's side?

16. The Lord who loves us found fit to tell us these things and we, who are subject to the same passions as yourselves, dare to say them, in order that we may not act in such a way, suffer the same punishment, and make ourselves liable to the judgment reserved for those who are finally rejected. Not only can we avoid this here and now by repenting, but through the fruits of repentance we can also stand with the Son of God, and become like Him, who is able to turn the unworthy into the worthy, and to make us through Himself sons of the heavenly Father, and heirs and fellow-heirs of His and His Father's glory and kingdom (*cf.* Rom. 8:17).

17. May we attain to this in Christ our Lord Himself, to whom be glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY THIRTY-ONE

DELIVERED AT THE LITANY ON THE FIRST OF AUGUST[458]

"GOD MADE NOT DEATH, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of any living thing" (Wisd. 1:13). If God did not create death, neither is He the cause of the sufferings that come upon us as a result of death. So what is the origin of our infirmities, illnesses, and all our other troubles, including death? Whence does death come? From our original disobedience to God, from the transgression of the commandment God gave us, from our ancestors' sin in God's paradise. Disease, illness, and the whole burden of different kinds of temptations are the result of sin. On account of sin we put on "coats of skins" (Gen. 3:21): our infirm mortal bodies beset with pain. We moved into this temporary, perishing world, and were sentenced to live lives full of suffering and misfortune. Sickness is like a rough, up-hill road on which sin set the human race. Death is the last stopping-place on this way, the final lodging.

2. Not only did God not make death, but He hindered it from happening. However, as He had created man as a living being with free will,[459] He could not prevent it without destroying His creature by taking away the freedom He had given. Nevertheless, in His wisdom and goodness He found a way to keep man from death while preserving his free will. How was this to be achieved? As soon as He had formed man and brought him to life, He gave him a counsel that would make him immortal. To establish this instruction very firmly from the beginning, He made it His commandment and proclaimed it openly, emphasizing that to break this life-giving precept meant

death, not death for the body at this stage, but death for the soul.[460] He told the man and the woman, our ancestors, "In the day that thou eatest of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt surely die" (*cf.* Gen. 2:17). Notice that He did not say in the imperative, "Die when you eat it." By His orders everything that exists was made, He commanded and all things were created (Ps. 33:9 LXX). But He did not give the command for death, although He forewarned that it would result from transgressing His commandment, telling them not to eat of the tree, for on the day they ate they would die. This He did so that they might follow His counsel, escape disobedience, and not encounter death. It is obvious that He was referring at that time to the death of the soul, not of the body, because they did not die physically on the day they ate from the forbidden tree.

3. What is the death of the soul? Abandonment by God.[461] Where there is light, darkness cannot be present. But once light departs from a place, darkness ensues, not as a result of the light but because of the shadow, caused by the obstruction to the light. In the same way, when God, who is life itself[462] and the life of every living creature, especially those who live in a godly manner, is in our soul, death cannot be there as well. But when God deserts our soul, death attaches itself to it; death, which does not originate from God, but from the cause of divine abandonment, which is sin.

4. Why does He who is everywhere present and nowhere absent desert the soul? Because the soul, which has been created by Him with free will, and cannot be constrained, first abandons Him of her own volition. We ourselves are to blame for God's abandonment of us, not God our Creator. We, alas, are the cause of our own death, voluntarily forsaking the Master, who created us to live, who is always with us and Himself gives us life. Like those who shut their eyes when the sun is at its height, we wilfully deprive ourselves of the light, while it is present and shines down upon us. Setting aside the guidance that brings life, and thus deserting God and distancing ourselves on purpose from life, we accepted Satan's deadly counsel, and by this means invited him in to live in us. As he is a dead spirit, who first forsook God Himself, he caused us to die.[463] I am still referring to death in respect of the soul, which, once it has been separated from God, "is dead", according to Paul, "while still alive" (1 Tim. 5:6). Such a life is worse than death: neglectful of everything good, active in all

that is evil; self-destructive and self-hating, it continuously drives itself from bad to worse.

5. Many may accuse Adam of being easily convinced by evil advice, breaking God's commandment, and hence bringing death upon us. But wanting to taste a poisonous herb prior to having experienced its effects is different from longing to eat it after finding out by experience that it is deadly. Someone who drinks poison after tasting it, and wretchedly draws down death on himself, is more blameworthy than someone inexperienced who does the same. Adam in his inexperience obeyed the devil's suggestion and transgressed the good counsel and commandment. We, on the other hand, do the same in the light of experience, and after the threats have been carried out. So we are all more guilty and deserving of condemnation than Adam. You may object that the tree is not with us now and God has not given us orders forbidding us to taste it. We may not have exactly the same tree, but we still have God's commandment, which acquits those who obey it and want to live by it from the guilt of all their sins and from the ancestral curse and condemnation. If, however, we set this precept aside and prefer the evil one's suggestions and attacks, it will send us into that eternal hell-fire promised and prepared for the devil.

6. What is this divine commandment now set before us? It is repentance, which means above all keeping away from what is forbidden. When we were cast out of the garden of divine bliss and rightly excluded from God's paradise, we sank to these depths and were condemned to spend our lives in the company of irrational animals, with no hope of returning to paradise by our own efforts. Then He who had justly passed judgment on us or, more accurately speaking, had rightly allowed it to befall us, mercifully came down to us for our sake in His all-surpassing love and goodness. He became man like us, though without sin (*cf.* Heb. 4:15), in order to instruct and rescue like by like, and inaugurated the saving counsel and commandment of repentance by saying to us, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). Before the Incarnation of the Word of God, the kingdom of heaven was as far away from us as the heavens are from the earth. But when the heavenly King visited us and graciously willed to be united with us, the heavenly kingdom drew near to us all.

7. I beseech you, brethren, let us repent, and let us bring forth fruits worthy of repentance (*cf.* Luke 3:8), so as to inherit the kingdom

of heaven. As it has come near to us, let us not distance ourselves from it through evil deeds. The light without evening has shone down on us; let us make our way towards its radiance by means of good works. Eternal life has been revealed; let us take hold of it through virtues as far as we are able. Christ, who makes us blessed, has come to dwell among us; let us eagerly draw near to Him. Let us escape the wretchedness of those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. Let us desire the works of repentance and let us make them our own: humbleness of mind,[464] contrition and spiritual mourning, a meek and merciful heart which loves righteousness, seeks after purity, is peaceful, conciliatory, patient, content to undergo persecutions, harm, insults, slander and suffering for the sake of truth and righteousness, in obedience to the Lord's words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness", and so on (Matt. 5:3–12).

8. When the Lord said, "Blessed are the poor", why did He add, "in spirit"? To distinguish blessed poverty from penury, to summarize what it means, and also to show us why it carries a blessing. Our spirit is the first part of us to be affected by passions. If it is good and loves God, it makes us blessed, but if it has an evil and God-hating disposition, it reduces us to wretchedness. For that reason the Lord begins the Beatitudes with a reference to the spirit. There are three kinds of poverty. The first is to lack life's necessities and depends on the individual's income and resources. It stands as the opposite extreme to wealth, as shown by the words of Scripture: "Give me neither poverty nor riches" (Prov. 30:8). Then there is physical poverty, when the body withers away because of an extremely frugal diet and lack of food, as the psalmist says, "My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh is changed by reason of the want of oil" (Ps. 109:24 LXX). Another type of poverty is the soul's moderation and restraint. This is our soul's spiritual humility,[465] the opposite of which is pride.

9. The first two types of poverty, financial and physical, are both worthily regarded as blessed, if they are accompanied by a humble attitude in the soul. If, on the other hand, they are divorced from humility and linked with pride, they are truly full of wretchedness. A person can be needy or in a poor bodily state either voluntarily or against his will. If he is involuntarily poor, he lacks humility, that good

disposition which repentance brings to the soul, and does not bear with courage the deprivation that has befallen him against his will. He complains against God and attacks His perfectly just providence as unfair. He treats men insolently in all sorts of different ways and does not look towards God, although no one who hopes in Him is ever put to shame. He neither restricts his expenditure, nor earns his living with manual labour, nor humbly begs from the well-to-do, but becomes a thief, a robber, a plunderer of graves, or a seizer of other people's goods. Or else he turns into a parasite, a slanderer, a liar and a hypocrite, fawning upon the wealthy with soft, servile words in the expectation of gaining something from them. Poor people of this sort are surely the most miserable of men and have nothing at all in common with those whom Christ called blessed.

10. If someone willingly lives in poverty, but does so with vanity rather than humility, and is not motivated by praiseworthy spiritual poverty in his renunciation of comfort and wealth, he is almost like the demons, who live in pride without food or possessions. That is why the Lord says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3), referring to those who, on account of their inner humility of soul, embrace the poverty that results from physical self-control, and count freedom from possessions as more desirable than all riches. If such people involuntarily suffer some lack, through patience and thanksgiving they voluntarily turn it to their advantage. To such as these, then, is the kingdom of heaven.

11. Let us strive, brethren, after this kind of poverty, that we may gain the heavenly kingdom. And if we prefer not to become poor in this way, let us at least share in the poverty of others by giving alms and contributing some of our possessions. Let us make friends by the mammon of unrighteousness, through what we have over and above our needs, while in this present life, that when we depart hence they may receive us into everlasting habitations (*cf.* Luke 16:9). It would please me, brethren, to expound to you now the meaning of all the Lord's Beatitudes in the gospel, but we have too little time, and I must continue the subject with which I began, namely, that God did not make death, disease or illness. We demonstrated this in respect to the death of the soul, of which the principal sting is sin (1 Cor. 15:56).

12. We should enquire and learn about the origin of physical death. God, who is life itself, fullness of life, and the cause of all life in time and eternity, and indeed of pre-eternal and Godlike life,[466]

neither gave us bodily death, nor created, nor commanded it to exist. If God did not make this death, He is also not responsible for physical diseases, so where do our bodily illnesses and maladies, as well as the death of our bodies, come from? Listen and understand what the source of this death is. The spiritual serpent and archetype of wickedness deserted to evil in the beginning and so was deprived of true, good life. He was justly driven away from the life from which he had already fled, and became a dead spirit, not dead in essence, for deadness has no essential existence, but dead through casting off true life.[467] He was not satisfied, though, with hurtling towards evil, but also made himself a death-dealing spirit, deceitfully, alas, persuading mankind to share in his own death.[468]

13. Because our ancestors agreed with Satan against the Creator's will and stripped off the garments of life and heavenly radiance, they became, sad to say, spiritually dead like Satan. Satan is not just a dead spirit, but brings death upon all who draw near to him. Both those who shared in his state of death had bodies through which the deadening counsel which they had put into practice finished its work. Once their spirits had died and become sources of death, they passed on their deadness to their bodies, which would have disintegrated immediately and returned to the earth, had they not been preserved by a higher providence and power to await the decision of Him who upholds all things by His word alone (*cf.* Heb. 1:3). He, as we have already mentioned, held back the sentence of physical death and postponed it. When He did pronounce it, in His profound wisdom and great love for mankind, He refrained from putting it into effect until a future time. He did not say to Adam, "As you have eaten from the tree from which I told you not to eat, go back whence you came." Instead, having first spoken of many things relevant to the course of human life on earth, He pronounced, "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). He did not utter these words as a commandment, but to foretell what was in all fairness to take place, with His permission and without Him preventing it. Notice that, like the death of the soul, physical death does not come from God but from transgression, as a result of the soul committing sin, and of the serpent deceitfully dragging man down with him into iniquity. Consequently, bodily ailments also found their way in as a result of sin.

14. The first one to become physically sick was Cain (*cf.* Gen. 4:14 LXX),[469] whose body was in a constant state of agitated movement all his life.

It was through sin that he developed this chronic malady. Trembling, called convulsions by doctors, is an involuntary movement in these parts of the body, which are intended to unite the limbs and keep them together. When such a condition comes about as a result of insufficient natural moisture, it is not susceptible to medical treatment and is incurable. Cain completely misused his natural tie with his brother, distorting love into hatred born of envy, and eventually became a murderer. So the deterioration caused by envy conspired with the passion of hatred, and he was chastised by an appropriate and incurable disease, a blow to the nerves and muscles holding his body together.[470]

15. Is it obvious now that not just death but bodily illness and infirmity originated from sin? The Lord demonstrated this in the gospel. When He was about to heal the paralysed man whom four people had lowered down in front of Him, He said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5), so as to start by drawing out the sting and removing the cause of the illness before proceeding to the cure. As for the paralysed man lying by the pool near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, the Lord told him after He had healed him, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee" (John 5:14). Paul too was aware that most sicknesses were caused by sin, and said of those who approach the holy altar unworthily, that they eat and drink damnation to themselves. Then he went on to say, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:29–30). The defects of our mortal nature, which give rise to all kinds of illnesses, clearly came originally from sin. Those who suffer to God's glory, like the man born blind, whom the Lord healed, are few (*cf.* John 9:3).

16. Summer is the unhealthiest of the four seasons,[471] particularly this month of August (for our insides, having been heated by high temperatures and burning sun, distribute one or two elements at random throughout the whole body, overwhelming the other elements and causing illness).[472] Our God-bearing Fathers knew this was a bad time for health, so to relieve us of sickness they commanded us to bless this water to be sprinkled,[473] so that all who approach with faith and are hallowed by it may stay aloof from the infirmities that attack us as a result of sin. At the same time the Fathers teach us that anyone who falls ill should not resort to spells and sorcerers but to God, to the intercession of His saints, and to the petitions, entreaties, and

prayers on our behalf of those who have consecrated and dedicated their whole life to Him. Those who turn to charms and magic deny God's existence, put themselves on the side of the demons, and kill their own souls. Sometimes they bring upon themselves incurable illnesses and death as a result. When, according to the Scripture, Ahab's son Ahaziah was sick, he sent to the god of the Ekronites,[474] who were idolaters intent on spells and oracles. It was to people of this kind that the son of king Ahab sent to enquire about his illness. But when Elijah the prophet met the messengers he said to them, "Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die" (2 Kgs. 1:2–4).

17. Do you understand that those who try to find out or experience something through charms and spells[475] deny that God is among us, and reap death as a result, principally death of the soul, but sometimes physical death as well? On the other hand, anyone who runs to God and His saints in need and sickness is relieved of his bodily pains and delivered from his infirmities, if this would be beneficial for him, and always finds healing for his soul and forgiveness of his sins. As James, Christ's apostle and brother, says, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jas. 5:14–15). But you must co-operate with the prayers made on your behalf by changing your way of life, making confession, giving alms, and other works of repentance. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16).

18. Delivered from all afflictions of soul and body and living sober lives, may we all pass easily through the period of this present life, and having done so, in due course share in that eternal, blessed, inviolate life, which is completely free from suffering and hurt, in Christ Himself the Physician and God of our souls and bodies, to whom be glory together with the Father and the Holy Spirit unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY THIRTY-TWO

ON SAINT MATTHEW'S GOSPEL FOR THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST[476]

CHRIST WALKING ON THE WATER AND ABOUT TEMPTATIONS

JAMES THE LORD'S BROTHER SAYS, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (Jas. 1:2). He does not say simply, "Rejoice", but "Count it all joy", because he is not exhorting us to be oblivious to painful things, which would be impossible, but proposing that we should let this God-pleasing way of reckoning prevail. He uses the words "all joy" to mean pure, profound, unceasing joy, especially when the temptations are many and various. Why? Because through patiently bearing temptations we are tested and found acceptable in divine matters. Not only that, but everyone knows that we have proved acceptable. The Wisdom of Solomon says of the saints, "God tested them, and found them worthy for himself" (Wisd. 3:5). Surely this testing of theirs calls for rejoicing. God freed Job from all his sorrows over his temptation by saying the same thing to him: "Dost thou think that I would have dealt with thee in any other way, than that thou mightest appear to be righteous?" (Job 40:8 Lxx). What was he telling him? "I treated you in such a way as to test your faith in me in health, honour and plenty, and you showed your righteousness by using these My gifts according to My will, handling and managing them as I Myself wished. Then I behaved towards you so as to try out your faith in Me in sickness, disgrace and distress, and you demonstrated your righteousness by saying, 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' (Job 2:10)."

2. What is the source of patience in temptations? Genuine faith in God. Temptations are therefore a means of proving the faithful. That is why after James, the Lord's brother, has exhorted us to rejoice, he adds, "The trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work" (Jas. 1:3–4). Do not curtail your virtuous acts, he says, when temptations assail you, but acquire perfect virtue with patience. We cannot become perfect just through involuntary suffering. Voluntary acts are necessary as well, such as chastity, righteousness, love towards God and our neighbour, and so on, because we must have these virtues to attain perfection. So the godly apostle also tells us, "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (Jas. 1:4). His precise meaning is that if you want to demonstrate that your faith in God is perfect, you must not only courageously bear what befalls you from without, but you should also be active in works pleasing to God, difficult though this be. When action and suffering coincide in the cause of good they make godly men perfect.

3. Why did he not say, "Rejoice when you act virtuously", instead of "when you are in temptations"? Because acting virtuously is up to us and lies within our power,[477] whereas falling into trials does not depend on ourselves. As there is no way of reaching perfection or showing our faith in God without temptations, anyone striving to perfect his faith will be glad when he encounters them, as he has found the way to perfection. For those whose faith is perfect, temptations serve to show their perfection. Even more wondrous, however, is that when trials overtake imperfect people they make them perfect, as proved by the words of the Gospel we have read today.

4. Let us read it to your charity from the beginning of the passage. "At that time Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray" (Matt. 14:22–23). When did this happen? After He had fed five thousand men, besides women and children with five loaves and two fishes, and they were filled, to the extent that the fragments that remained filled twelve baskets (Matt. 14:19–21), as we heard last Sunday in church.[478]

5. You might wonder why He made the disciples go into the boat. It could be said that everything that happened subsequently was part of His divine plan, as He pressed on to complete what He came to earth to do. Personally, I should have been surprised if He had not constrained them to get into the boat. The Lord wished to give a practical example of every good work. To that end, He showed us how we must be with the multitudes for the benefit of their souls and bodies, but He still had to demonstrate that it was necessary for us to be with God by bringing Him our minds freed from all earthly cares. Being quietly on our own in a deserted place is highly conducive to this. The time had come to teach that withdrawal, peace and prayer, and solitude were good, so He had to go up to the mountain to pray on His own. The disciples, on the other hand, loved being with Him all the time and were reluctant to leave Him. How could He go up the mountain alone without constraining them to enter the boat and cross to the other side?

6. There is another significance in this as well. After healing, teaching and feeding the crowds in an extraordinary manner, the Lord now sent them away, went up the mountain, and obliged His disciples to entrust themselves to the sea and the waves. In the same way, later on, when He had healed our human nature through His Incarnation, taught us and nourished us, He departed from us physically, ascended to heaven, and sent His disciples unto the whole world, that is to say, out on to the bitter sea of the Gentiles, which was full of temptations, to face those trials as in the ship[479] of the gospel, and in the Church founded upon it. He did not just send them: He made them go. Anyone who knows the story of John, Christ's beloved theologian, or knows why Stephen's suffering (Acts 6:8ff), and the resulting persecution, were permitted (*cf.* Acts 8:1), will understand my words.[480] The apostles did not want to leave Jerusalem, but when they had to because of the persecutions, they were scattered throughout the world, and so fulfilled their mission (*cf.* Matt. 28:19).

7. Not only were they constrained to sail upon the sea of this world, where there is every affliction and all sorts of temptation, but also to cross to the other side, to triumph over temptations and go beyond them. Without Jesus, however, they could not do it. "The ship", it says, "was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves: for the wind was contrary" (Matt. 14:24). If at that time the soulless wind was against them, later on Domitian, Trajan and Nero were more strongly

opposed to them.[481] Such men and their like are savage waves whipped up to threaten the Church, and the hostile wind which drives them on and stirs them up is the evil spirit, the devil, the relentless opponent of Christ's Church. "And in the fourth watch", it says, "of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea" (Matt. 14:25). That is to say, after the ninth hour of the night, because it was customary to divide the night into four consecutive watches, and if the night is reckoned as twelve hours long, the fourth watch begins with the tenth hour.

8. He left them to be tormented this long by the waves to exercise them in patience, and make them able to bear hardship.[482] Then when He appeared He allowed them to think He was a ghost and to be so frightened that they cried out with terror, even though He had come to save them (Matt. 14:26). You may be aware that He did the same with His people of old. Just at the time when He was about to part the sea miraculously to provide a way to safety, they seemed to be in the utmost danger, hemmed in by inescapable evils with enemies all round (Exod. 14:10ff). In this present case, too, before the Lord released them from the demons' oppression, those whom He had come to deliver were deeply troubled at His appearance. For this reason His acts of kindness are not only precious to those who benefit from them, but also unforgettable. As they were calling upon the God of all He appeared to them among the waves, showing that He is "the God who is over all" (Rom. 9:5), who stretches out His hand to help all who entreat Him. While the sea raged, He walked upon the waves, amply demonstrating that He is the one of whom it was foretold that He would walk on the sea as on dry land, to whom David had prophetically addressed the words, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters" (Ps. 77:19), and "Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them" (Ps. 89:9), just as the Lord later did. As soon as He saw that they were terrified because they did not recognize Him, for it was dark, He at once spoke to them, making Himself known by His voice and saying, "It is I; be not afraid" (Matt. 14:27). "I AM even HE WHO IS the eternal God (*cf.* Exod. 3:14),[483] and in these latter days have become man for your sake. You can see Me and hear My voice and everything is possible for Me. My body can walk on the waves, and I can enable others to do the same." At Peter's words, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me

come unto thee on the water" (Matt. 14:28), He commanded and it was so.

9. Let us return to what we were saying earlier, that when, figuratively speaking, the disciples had been sent out on to the sea of the nations of this world, the Lord was carried up to heaven, as if up a mountain. There He offers up prayers on our behalf, having become a high priest for us, and having entered within the veil (*cf.* Heb. 6:19–20) to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, according to the apostle (Heb. 2:17). The disciples, meanwhile, who were sent to cross over to the other side, in other words, to conquer and overcome the tempters, have not won a final victory. The enemy is still active and the nations rave against Christ's Church. But in the fourth watch of the night, after the natural law, the written law, and Christ's first coming, which is associated with the law of grace,[484] it will clearly be time for Christ's second advent, if we give the fourth watch of the night its symbolic interpretation. Then the Lord will come to trample down, abolish, and bring into subjection every principality, authority and power. In the sight of all He will put an end to the terrible waves stirred up against His Church and trample them under foot.

10. Remember that the swelling waves whipped up by the hostile wind symbolize the rulers of this world. If I pass over the intervening sequence of events, you will notice too, that once the Lord and Peter, who had left the boat to go to Him, had returned to the boat, the wind ceased, and when they had crossed over, they came to land (Matt. 14:32, 34). When the Lord and all the saints who have departed from our midst, as represented by Peter, join us at the second coming, the invisible enemy will be utterly wiped out, and we, who have passed through the rough sea of life, shall enter the land of the meek, "whence all pain, sorrow and sighing have fled away".[485] "They that were in the ship", it says, "came and worshipped Jesus, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matt. 14:33). Then "every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10).

11. Leaving aside this figurative interpretation, let us recall what we said originally, that trials are not only profitable for those such as Job, Peter, Paul and their like, whose faith is perfect, but when they overtake those who are imperfect they make them perfect. Here not only Peter, not only the other disciples, who were still imperfect, but

everyone in the boat found such great benefit for their faith from this temptation, that they came and worshipped Jesus, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matt. 14:33). The apostle to whom we referred in the beginning was right to say, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life" (Jas. 1:12).

12. I want you to be aware, brethren, that there are two kinds of temptation. I am not, however, referring here to the fact that temptations befall us through pleasure or pain, health or sickness, honour or dishonour, riches or poverty, of which by far the worst are those associated with pleasure, health, honour and riches. Although this is so, these are not the two categories of temptations of which I am now speaking. What is it I am trying to convey to you? Listen and learn. The great James, who is called the Lord's brother in the flesh, because the Lord's Virgin Mother was betrothed to Joseph according to the divine plan for our salvation, said, "Rejoice when ye fall into divers temptations" (*cf.* Jas. 1:2), and "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for he shall receive the crown of life" (*cf.* Jas. 1:12). But then, as though someone had asked him, "Are there not some people who blaspheme when tempted, or who fall into complete despair, or others who hang themselves? If the temptation is an inborn or physical one, perhaps anger or desire, are there not some who commit murder or others who surrender to immorality? So how can temptation result in crowns from God?" James defended himself from such objections by going on to say, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (Jas. 1:13). Temptation in this context means the evil and sin into which we fall, and by which Christ was untouched, even though He was tempted in another sense. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted", it says, "he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). After He had been baptized in the Jordan, He went up the mountain to be tempted of the devil, according to the Gospel account (Matt. 4:1–11).

13. Troubles that befall people from without, bodily afflictions and the assaults of the enemy, even if they involve no guilt at all, are all called temptations. The devil even attacked the Lord, tempting Him. But the same word also refers to those sins by which each one is tempted when, as the same James says, "He is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth

sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:14–15). What sort of death? Eternal death, the departure of God from the soul on account of sin. From Adam until the end of the world such death has been, and will be, followed by physical death. In the age to come, however, for those who do not repent in this life, their soul's death will be followed by the unbearable eternal damnation of soul and body, once they have been justly condemned by Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28).

14. Brethren, let us flee as far as we can from this sort of temptation, since it lies in our power to escape from it. When we see that we have fallen into it, let us grieve. If we sorrow as much as we should over such falls, we shall acquire for ourselves repentance to salvation not to be repented of (2 Cor. 7:10). It is this temptation that I have come to take away from you, the kind which does eternal harm, not the other which causes temporary loss or damage. By grace we are ministers of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is High Priest, not of what is transitory, but of the good things to come, and who by His own blood entered into the true holy place, having obtained for us, not temporary, but eternal redemption (*cf.* Heb. 9:11–12). We have come to bring you, if you obey, eternal deliverance from temptations of the soul, not of the body. "For our weapons are not carnal", as the apostle says, "but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (*cf.* 2 Cor. 10:4), not visible fortresses, but those erected against us by the invisible enemy.

15. It seems to me, however, that you are neither aware of this redemption from the temptations afflicting your souls, nor do you seek it, for you grieve mostly about those temptations over which you should rejoice, because, if you so wish, they can procure your eternal deliverance. You ask me mainly for relief from physical temptations, even though I showed my contempt for such trials by coming to you, choosing to suffer with you.[486] Yet if we sorrow over our sins rather than over the harm we suffer, we shall not only gain salvation and eternal redemption, but also deliverance from fleeting temptations. Why has our life become painful, sorrowful, violent and fraught with disorder? Surely because we have transgressed the commandment and thrown ourselves into the forbidden temptation, sin. If now we cleanse ourselves from all iniquity by repenting, we shall need more moderate temptations here, and in time we shall return to the life free from sorrows and trials.

16. Let us turn our minds to this saving thought and let us be sorrowful and troubled, not about physical afflictions and losses, but over the things that damage our souls, which are real temptations and worth grieving over. Then we shall be able to address to God the words He Himself taught us, "Lead us not into temptation", obviously forbidden, blameworthy temptation, "but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, unto the ages of ages. Amen" (*cf.* Matt. 6:13).

HOMILY THIRTY-THREE

On Virtues And Their Opposite Passions

AND THAT THE WORLD OF WHICH THE DEVIL IS PRINCE
DOES NOT REFER TO GOD'S CREATION,
BUT TO THOSE WHO SUBJECT THEMSELVES TO THE DEVIL
BY THEIR MISUSE OF CREATION

DELIVERED DURING THE LITANY[487]

WHATEVER YOU SOW IN CULTIVATED GROUND, you reap the same. If you plant fruit trees, or sow wheat, barley or some other useful crop, the earth brings them forth and they grow and are fruitful. But if the land is left untilled and unsown, it sprouts useless plants, mostly the thorns and thistles mentioned in the curse pronounced against us (Gen. 3:18). Even if a tree happens to grow, it will most probably have no fruit, be useless and full of thorns. It is the same with the soul. Whatever attitudes you instil in it, you will receive the same back. If you keep company with good people, listen to spiritual teaching and follow it, putting its precepts into practice, your soul cultivates virtues and becomes useful to God, to others, and to yourself. But if you delight in bad company and do not heed spiritual teaching, or even regard it as trivial, your soul turns wild and out of control, sprouts evil passions, and yields the stings and thorns of its own and the body's death, namely, sins.

2. In the beginning, as you all know, the serpent which originated evil stung man through sin, made him mortal, threw him out of paradise and brought him into this fleeting, painful world. Now, unless we hasten through repentance to heal the wounds he has inflicted, he

will dispatch us to everlasting punishment and hell-fire. Just as savage animals and reptiles lurk in wild woods and thorny thickets, so this evil dragon, the great universal beast, dwells, according to Job, under the various trees of pleasure (Job 40:21 LXX), and, he says, destruction runs in front of him (Job 41:14 LXX). Because I long for you all to be out of reach of this destruction, and would do anything to achieve this, I labour for your sake with words and spiritual teaching, brethren, on a daily basis for those who approach me privately, and also publicly for everyone in church, as the opportunity arises.[488] This instruction cuts down evil's trees, forces open sin's depths, blunts the goads of wickedness, triumphs over the dragon – the source of iniquity – shows up the straight path, and bestows saving knowledge.

3. Christ's Church, especially here in this great city, includes not only persons who are simple and lacking in formal education,[489] but also people who are wise and cultivated, both by nature and through the study of secular disciplines and the teachings of the Church. For that reason I do not for the most part make my homilies too basic. I prefer to help those who are lower to rise, rather than to bring down those who are higher on their account. Anyone, even if he is unlearned, who pays careful attention to my teaching, will not be wholly unaware of what I am saying. That portion, however small, which he can understand and take hold of and put into practice, will chase away every evil from his soul and strengthen, fill, and save the heart which accepts it.[490] My instruction is derived from divinely inspired Scripture which resembles that stone which, as Daniel tells us, was very small when it came from the mountain, but it smote the image of transitory power, broke it to pieces and destroyed it, and expanded to fill the whole earth (*cf.* Dan. 2:34–35). Not only should the simple and less cultivated[491] listen attentively to what I am going to say, but particularly the wise. Even if my address makes some allowances for the unread,[492] the wisdom it contains is far from lowly, and the benefits it offers far from obscure. I shall teach you about evil passions and about virtues, revealing their two distinct roots, that you may cut off the former and cherish the latter.

4. Whereas love for God is the source and starting point of every virtue, love for the world is the cause of all evil. For that reason these two loves are at enmity with each another and destroy each other. As the Lord's brother declares: "Friendship of the world is enmity to God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy

of God" (Jas. 4:4). And John, whom Christ loved, says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, is not of the Father" (*cf.* 1 John 2:15–16). Let us take heed, brethren, lest by loving evil desires and being arrogant to one another, we fall away from our heavenly Father's love. For these two evils include every passion which separates us from God.

5. The foundation, origin and cause of these two opposing roots, love for God and love for the world, is another pair of implacably opposed loves. Love for the world springs from love for the body,[493] since we love the world because of our body's well-being.[494] On the other hand, love for God comes from love for our spirit, our soul, for we love God on account of the comfort and good fortune our souls will have in the world to come. The great Paul bears witness to the fact that these two attitudes are at enmity with each other by saying, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit", meaning the soul, "and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17).

6. How does love for our own soul engender love for God? We are threatened with the unquenchable fire of hell and promised God's eternal kingdom. This everlasting kingdom is for those who listen to God's commandments and act upon them, whereas hell-fire is for those who by their actions disobey Christ's gospel. When true believers, who love their souls and desire to keep them for eternal life, hear these threats and promises, they immediately conceive longing and fear, fear of the unending pain in the threatened fire of hell, and longing for the promised kingdom of God with its eternal joy.

7. Because they yearn to attain to divine, unfading delight and are afraid of suffering in that fire, they break their ties with everything passionate, blameworthy and earthly, and strive to cleave to God through intense prayer, knowing for sure that He alone has power and authority to deliver them from the agony of hell, and make them worthy of that eternal joy which passes understanding. In this way they acquire love for God, and as they become more perfectly united with God through this love, they gain all the virtues as well. When God is at work in us, every kind of virtue becomes our own, but when He is not, everything we do is sin. As the Lord says in the Gospel, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Those who truly act virtuously are aware of this, and do not pride themselves on any of their achievements, but humbly glorify God, the fount of virtues, by whom they are filled with

the light that bestows goodness. When the air is full of sunlight, the glory and radiance it displays are not its own but the sun's. So those who are united with God through fulfilling His commandments are, according to Paul, the sweet savour of Christ (*cf.* 2 Cor. 2:15). They have Christ's fragrance, and proclaim the virtues of Him who called them "out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

8. Through spiritual instruction, knowledge of things to come is instilled in us, and a right love for our soul engenders in us, who believe, fear and longing for these future realities. This fear and longing results in turn in sincere, unceasing prayer and supplication to God. Then this continuous prayer brings love for Him and union with Him, through which every virtue is born, accompanied by humility, because we are aware of who has brought about these virtues within us. But how is it that loving our body gives rise to love for the world, which then produces evil passions and a multitude of sins? Just as our soul naturally longs for the lasting enjoyment to come, so our body yearns for the fleeting pleasure of the present. Such delight is sensual, works through our senses, and comes from visible, tangible things, that is, the world. Whoever is a friend of his body is a friend of the world. When, as a result of this love for the body, we have an excessive desire for worldly pleasures, pursue them and cultivate them, we wrap ourselves in all the different kinds of ugliness of the passions. As earthly enjoyment works through the senses, and our senses are many and diverse, sensual pleasures and passions too are of great number and variety. Some act through our sight, others through our hearing, others again through our senses of smell, touch and taste.

9. It is not food that is to blame for those passions associated with taste, but food to excess, which is self-indulgence.[495] These passions are gluttony, eating delicacies, drinking too much, and drunkenness.[496] When the stomach receives immoderate amounts of food, it passes it through the digestive system in great quantities, and by so doing provides abundant fuel for evil's fire. Having received loathsome things, it yields disgusting torrents, by means of which the lower passions come into being: fornication, adultery, immorality,[497] licentiousness,[498] and bodily impurity in all its forms. These passions enslave our hearing, sight and sense of smell, and make us long for what is filthy: foul talk, immoral songs, satanic dances, perfumes which encourage defilement, disgusting cosmetics, and self-adornment with extravagant clothes and hairstyles. People in the grip of such

passions beautify themselves outwardly, but inwardly they wear the ugly mask of dishonourable vices. They really are like the "whited sepulchers", which appear outwardly beautiful, but within are full of stench and all uncleanness (Matt. 23:27). Once our senses have been subjected to evil from within and without, from far and near, they attract filth, and deadly sin goes in and out through these natural windows of ours. "Those things which proceed out of the mouth", it says, "they defile a man" (Matt. 15:18), and "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28).

10. This sort of body-loving soul, which pursues pleasurable sensations by every means and gathers material from all over to delight the touch, the taste, and the other senses, begets acquisitiveness[499] and love of money,[500] which give rise to theft, extortion and every form of greed.[501] In addition to these evils, there is another all-embracing means of perception within us apart from the bodily senses, imagination,[502] which produces other pleasures and passions in those who love the world, such as conceit[503], self-esteem[504] and arrogance.[505] Further complex passions are formed from a mixture of sensual perceptions and imagination. These are the desire to please people,[506] vanity and pride.[507]

11. The soul's delight that originates from God and things divine is pure, free from passion, and unmixed with suffering. By contrast, this world offers enjoyment naturally accompanied by pain, not just on account of all sorts of changes and alterations, but because it gives each person a tiny part, and deprives him of the rest. There is only one world, and it is divided among innumerable millions of people, each of whom desires and strives to possess it all, and have it in his power. If someone is enamored of the world and desires the whole of it, whether he has almost all of it, or just a small share, though still more than someone else, he himself sorrows of what he lacks, and causes distress to the person with less, because of his wealth. When, however, spiritual and divine enjoyment and bliss are shared out, without suffering any division,[508] even if one person receives everything, no one else suffers any loss. Each of us has the faith in its entirety, but instead of causing offence to our neighbour's piety, our faith assists his in many different ways.

12. As I was saying, this world yields pleasure accompanied by pain. Our body accepts the pleasure but refuses the pain, so the world is at

the same time both kindly and vicious towards it. Those who are held fast by love for their body are unaware that the world by its very nature is a source of suffering as well as delight.[509] They cannot grasp that the world they dote upon should be utterly shunned, and when they are discontented with the grief inherent in the world, being ignorant, like people fighting in the dark, of the cause of their misfortune, they blame one another each time difficulties arise. Hence, another unpleasant string of passions is invented by the wretched human race, giving rise to abusiveness, slander, false accusations, anger, hatred, strife, envy, and all kinds of bitterness filled with malicious desires.[510] Because of such evils there are wars and murders all over the world, especially in our generation, because love has grown cold and sin has abounded (*cf.* Matt. 24:12).

13. Let us continue in oneness of mind, bound together by peace one towards the other, and abstaining from that rage which delivers bodies and souls unto destruction. I beseech you brethren, if anyone has a complaint against another, let us forgive one another as Christ forgave us, that we may be always peaceful, not only in God's churches but at home and in the market place, and with one mind and one mouth glorify our Father in heaven. Apart from this evil catalogue of deadly passions associated with pleasure and pain, there are others, which are neither painless nor pleasant, but have their origin in a coming together of opposites. They include sarcasm, flattery, deceit and hypocrisy.[511]

14. Do you see how subtly misleading and treacherous this world is, with how many evils it encompasses us, and by how many means it separates us from God? It makes us subject to countless passions and removes us in a variety of ways from Him who is above all passion. That is why the Lord Himself said, "The whole world lieth in wickedness" (*cf.* 1 John 5:19), and called the devil the prince of this world (John 12:31), because he is the ruler of the darkness of this age. Do not imagine that the evil one holds sway over heaven and earth and all creation in between, and is given the name of prince of this world on that account – perish the thought! This is not the world that lies in wickedness. Only He who has measured heaven with a span, according to the prophet, and held the earth in a measure (*cf.* Isa. 40:12), is the Creator of all. However, the misuse of creation, the impassioned abuse of our free will,[512] the world of unrighteousness, evil desire and pride, as the beloved disciple of Christ says, are not of the Father

(*cf.* 1 John 2:16). This is the world that is subject to wickedness, because of our misuse and mismanagement. It is over this world that Satan rules, over the many passions we have listed, which are brought about by our sin-loving will with the evil one's cooperation, and unless we free ourselves from this evil inclination, we shall make him our own absolute master.

15. We who are in Christ's ranks should long for the world above. Let our desire be directed towards the kingdom He promised us. Let us shun enjoyments which drag down our soul, fear the hell-fire with which pleasure-lovers[513] are threatened, flee self-indulgence, drunkenness, fornication, prodigality, greed, injustice, vanity, pride, hatred, anger and inhumanity. These are the things which give the evil one power, alas, over ourselves and the world. We should escape from the world's deception and from its prince, and show through our good works that we are the work of God's good hands. By so doing, we shall make best use of the present, and enjoy the promised eternal benefits when the time comes.

16. May we all attain to these by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belongs glory together with the Father and the Holy Spirit unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY THIRTY-FOUR

ON THE HOLY TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

IN WHICH IT IS DEMONSTRATED THAT THE LIGHT OF THE TRANSFIGURATION IS UNCREATED[514]

WE ARE FILLED WITH PRAISE AND WONDER when we see this magnificent work of God, the entire visible creation. The pagan Greek sages also extolled and admired it as they investigated it. But whereas we marvel at it to the glory of the Creator, they did so against His glory, for in their wretchedness they worshipped the creature rather than the Creator (*cf.* Rom. 1:25). In the same way, we elucidate the words of the prophets, apostles and fathers for the benefit of those who read them and in honour of the Spirit who spoke through them. The leaders of any given evil heresy also attempt to interpret their writings, but their purpose is to harm their followers and deny that truth which is in accordance with piety, using the words of the Spirit against the Spirit. The words of the gospel of grace are lofty and suitable for mature ears and minds, but these words too our God-bearing Fathers softened in their own mouths, making them appropriate for those of us who are less than perfect, just as mothers devoted to their children chew solid food and render it serviceable and easy to take for babies still at the breast. The moisture in their mothers' mouth is nourishment for the children, and the thoughts in the hearts of our God-bearing Fathers are suitable food for souls that listen and obey. The mouths of evil, disreputable men, however, are full of deadly poison which, when mixed with the words of life, makes even them lethal for careless listeners.

2. Let us flee from those who reject patristic interpretations and attempt by themselves to deduce the complete opposite. While pretending to concern themselves with the literal sense of the passage, they reject its godly meaning. We should run away from them more than we would from a snake, for when a snake bites it kills the body temporarily, separating it from the immortal soul, but when these evil men get their teeth into a soul, they separate it from God, which is eternal death for that soul. Let us escape as far as we can from such people, and take refuge with those who teach piety and salvation in accordance with the traditions of the Fathers.

3. I have said these things to your charity by way of introduction because today we celebrate the noble feast of Christ's transfiguration, and we shall be addressing the subject of the light that shone on that occasion, which is much opposed even in our own day by the enemies of the light.[515] Let us now briefly set out the words of today's Gospel reading from the beginning to unfold the mystery and demonstrate the truth. "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun" (*cf.* Matt. 17:1–2). The first thing we should consider in this Gospel passage is from what point in time Matthew, Christ's apostle and evangelist, counts the six days preceding the day on which the Lord was transfigured. Six days after which day? Six days after the day when the Lord taught His disciples, saying, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father" (Matt. 16:27), and adding, "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16:28). He was referring to the light of His transfiguration as His Father's glory and as His own kingdom. The evangelist Luke indicates the same sequence of events and expresses it more clearly saying, "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering" (Luke 9:28–29).

4. But how do the two accounts agree, when one clearly states that there were eight days between the promise and the manifestation, and the other says it followed after six days? Listen and you will understand. There were eight on the mountain, but they appeared to be six. Three, Peter, James and John, went up with Jesus. There they saw Moses and Elijah with Him, talking to Him, making six. But the Father and the Holy Spirit were invisibly accompanying the Lord.

The Father bore witness with His voice that Christ was His beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit joined His brilliance to Christ's in the radiant cloud, and showed that the Son was of one nature with the Father and Himself and united in Their light. For Their wealth consists in Their oneness of nature and in the unified outburst of Their brilliance. So the six persons were eight. Just as there is no contradiction between six and eight in this respect, so there is no disagreement between the evangelists when Matthew says it was after six days, and Luke that it was about eight days after these sayings. It is as if through these two phrases they present us with a figurative allusion to those visibly gathered on the mountain and those mystically present.

5. Anyone who examines their words closely will see that the evangelists both say the same thing. When Luke mentions eight days, he is not contradicting Matthew's statement that it was after six days, but is including the day on which the words were uttered and the day when the Lord was transfigured. Matthew allows those who read intelligently to understand this, because he says "after" to make it clear that he is referring to the following day, whereas Luke leaves the word out. He does not say, "after eight days", as Matthew says "after six days", but "about eight days passed". So there is no difference in meaning between the evangelists' accounts.

6. They do, however, indicate another great mystery through this apparent mutual contradiction. Let those of you who are quick witted pay careful heed to what I am going to say. Why did one evangelist say "after six days", whereas the other went beyond a week and mentioned the eighth day? Because the great vision of the light of the Lord's transfiguration is the mystery of the eighth day,[516] that is, of the age to come, which is manifested after this world, which was made in six days, has ceased, and the sixfold action of our senses[517] has been transcended. We have five senses, but if you add speech[518] it brings the number of ways in which our senses work to six. The kingdom of God promised to those who are worthy surpasses not only our senses but also our words. The seventh day is honoured with blessed rest from the activities of our sixfold senses, and after this pause, the kingdom of God shines forth on the eighth day, by virtue of a higher energy. It was this power of the divine Spirit, through which those who are worthy will see God's kingdom, that the Lord foretold, according to the divine Luke, when He declared to His disciples, "There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have

seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1, *cf.* Luke 9:27), bestowing on those who see it the power to behold what is invisible, and purifying them in advance from the deadly, soul-destroying defilement that is sin. The taste of sin is the starting point of evil thoughts, and those who are cleansed beforehand will not experience the death of the soul, having been preserved undefiled in their minds as well, as I understand it, by the power of the manifestation to come.

7. "There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). The King of all is everywhere, and so is His kingdom, so the coming of His kingdom does not mean it arrives here from somewhere else, but that it is revealed through the power of the divine Spirit. That is why He said it would come with power. But this power is not for just anyone, but for those who have stood with the Lord, those who have been established in His faith, men like Peter, James and John, who, as the Scripture tells us, were first brought up a high mountain, that is to say, above the lowliness of our nature. That is why God is imagined to be on a mountain, coming down from His heights and leading us up from the depths of our abasement, that He who cannot be contained might, to an extent compatible with our human nature and our safety, be contained. This idea is not something inferior to man's mind, but far superior and more exalted than it, being instilled in it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

8. The light of the Lord's transfiguration does not come into being or cease to be, nor is it circumscribed or perceptible to the senses, even though for a short time on the narrow mountain top it was seen by human eyes. Rather, at that moment the initiated disciples of the Lord "passed", as we have been taught, "from flesh to spirit" by the transformation of their senses, which the Spirit wrought in them,[19] and so they saw that ineffable light, when and as much as the Holy Spirit's power granted them to do so. Those who are not aware of this light and who now blaspheme against it think that the chosen apostles saw the light of the Lord's transfiguration with their created faculty of sight, and in this way they endeavour to bring down to the level of a created object not just that light – God's power and kingdom – but even the power of the Holy Spirit, by which divine things are revealed to the worthy. They have not heard, or have not believed, Paul's words, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:9–10).

9. When the eighth day came, as we have said, the Lord "took Peter and James and John, and went up into a mountain to pray" (*cf.* Luke 9:28). He would always either withdraw from everyone, including the apostles, to pray alone, as when, having fed the five thousand men along with women and children, with five loaves and two fishes, He immediately dismissed them, constrained all the disciples to go into a boat, and went up the mountain to pray (Matt. 14:16–23). Or else He would take a few disciples, those that surpassed the others, with Him. When His saving passion approached He told the other disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray", but took Peter, James and John with Him (Matt. 26:36–37). Here too He took only these three with Him, "and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them" (Matt. 17:1–2), that is to say, while they were watching.

10. What do the words "and was transfigured" mean? Chrysostom the theologian said that the Lord graciously willed to open up a little of His divinity, and revealed God within Him to the initiated disciples.[520] "As he prayed", says Luke, "the fashion of his countenance was altered" (Luke 9:29), and, as Matthew writes, "His face did shine as the sun" (Matt. 17:2). He compares the light to the sun, not that anyone should imagine that that light was visible to bodily eyes – away with those whose minds are blind and capable of understanding nothing more exalted than visible phenomena! – but that we might know that Christ as God is for those who live by the Spirit and see with spiritual eyes what the sun is for those who live by their senses and see with natural vision. Those who behold God in divine contemplation[521] need no other light, for He alone is the light of those who live for ever. What need is there for a second light when they have the greatest light of all? Thus while He was praying He became radiant and revealed this ineffable light in an indescribable way to the chosen disciples in the presence of the most excellent of the prophets, that He might show us that it is prayer which procures this blessed vision,[522] and we might learn that this brilliance comes about and shines forth when we draw near to God through the virtues, and our minds are united with Him. It is given to all who unceasingly reach up towards God by means of perfect good works and fervent prayer, and is visible to them. Everything about the blessed divine nature is truly beautiful

and desirable,[523] and is visible only to those whose minds have been purified. Anyone who gazes at its brilliant rays and its graces, partakes of it to some extent, as though his own face were touched by dazzling light. That is why Moses' countenance was glorified when he spoke with God (Exod. 34:29).

11. Do you observe that Moses too was transfigured when he went up the mountain and beheld the Lord's glory? But although he underwent transfiguration, he did not bring it about, in accordance with him who said, "the humble light of truth brings me to the point where I see and experience God's radiance".[524] Our Lord Jesus Christ, however, possessed that radiance in His own right. He did not need prayer to illuminate His body with divine light, but He showed how God's splendour would come to the saints and how they would appear. For the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:43), and when they have all become divine light, they will behold, as children of that light, Christ's indescribable divine radiance. The glory that proceeds naturally from His divinity was shown on Tabor to be shared by His body as well, because of the unity of His person.[525] Thus His face shone as the sun on account of this light.

12. There are people in our own times, who boast of pagan Greek learning and the wisdom of this world, and who completely disobey spiritual men in matters of the Spirit, and choose to oppose them. When they hear that the light of the Lord's transfiguration on the mountain was seen by the eyes of the apostles, they immediately reduce it to visible, created light. They drag down that immaterial, never-setting, pre-eternal light,[526] which surpasses not only our senses but also our minds, because they themselves are at a low level, and are incapable of conceiving of anything higher than earthly things. Nevertheless, He who shone with this light proved in advance that it was uncreated[527] by referring to it as the kingdom of God. God's kingdom is not subservient or created, but uniquely unsubduable and invincible. It is beyond the bounds of both time and aeon,[528] and cannot be said to have had a beginning or to have been overtaken by time or age. We believe this kingdom to be the inheritance of those who are being saved.[529]

13. Given that when He was transfigured the Lord shone and displayed glory, splendour and light, and will come again as He was seen by His disciples on the mountain, does this mean He somehow

took this light to Himself, and will have for ever something He did not have before? Perish the blasphemous thought! Because anyone who says so imagines that Christ has three natures: the divine, the human, and the one belonging to this light. It follows that He did not manifest a radiance other than that which He already had invisibly. He possessed the splendour of the divine nature hidden under His flesh. This light, then, is the light of the Godhead, and it is uncreated.[530] According to the theologians, when Christ was transfigured He neither received anything different, nor was changed into anything different, but was revealed to His disciples as He was,[531] opening their eyes and giving sight to the blind. Take note that eyes with natural vision are blind to that light. It is invisible, and those who behold it do so not simply with their bodily eyes, but with eyes transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.[532]

14. The apostles were transformed, therefore, and saw that transformation which our human clay had undergone, not at that time, but from the moment in which it had been assumed, when it was deified through union with the Word of God. That is why the Virgin, who mysteriously conceived and bore Him, recognized her child as God incarnate, as did Simeon, when he took Him up in his arms as an infant, and the aged Anna, who came to meet Him (Luke 2:25ff). The power of God shone out visibly as if through thin glass to people who had had the eyes of their hearts purified.

15. Why does He take the leaders, and them alone, and go up with them? Obviously, to show them something great and mysterious. But how could the vision of ordinary light, visible to those chosen before they ascended, as well as to those left below, be a great mystery? Why would they need strengthening by the Spirit, and why would their eyes have to be assisted and changed by the Spirit to see such light, if it were visible and created? How could ordinary light be the glory and the kingdom of the Father and the Spirit? How could Christ come in that sort of glory and kingdom in the age to come, when there will be no need for air, light, place or anything of the sort, but God, according to the apostle, will be everything for us? (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:28). Clearly if He will be everything for us, He will also be our light. Again this demonstrates that this light is the light of the Godhead, because John, the greatest theologian among the evangelists, shows in the Revelation that the everlasting future "city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb

is the light thereof" (Rev. 21:23). Surely here he is also pointing us towards Jesus divinely transfigured on Tabor, whose light is His body, and who, instead of daylight, has the glory of divinity as revealed on the mountain to those who came up with Him. Of the inhabitants of that city John says, "They need no candle, neither light: and there shall be no night there" (*cf.* Rev. 22:5). What light is this, in which there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning? (Jas. 1:17). What is this unchangeable and never-setting light? Is it not the divine light?

16. How could Moses and Elijah, and particularly Moses who was a spirit without a body, have been seen and glorified by means of ordinary light? For they appeared in glory, and spoke of His departure, which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). And how did the apostles recognize men they had never seen before, except by the revealing power of that light?

17. In order not to strain your understanding too much, we shall keep the remaining verses of the Gospel for the time of the holy and divine Liturgy.[533] We believe what we have been taught by those enlightened by Christ, which they alone know with certainty – "My secrets are for me and those who are mine", as God said through the prophet (Isa. 24:16 LXX,[534] *cf.* Dan. 2:27ff). So, rightly believing what we were taught, and understanding the mystery of the Lord's transfiguration, let us make our way towards the radiance of that light. As we long for the beauty of unchanging glory, let us cleanse the eyes of our understanding from all earthly defilements, despising every delight and beauty that is not lasting, for sweet as it may be, it procures eternal suffering, and though it may enhance the body, it clothes the soul in that ugly robe of sin, on account of which the man without the garment of incorruptible union was bound and taken away into outer darkness (*cf.* Matt. 22:11–13).

18. May we all be delivered from such a fate by the illumination and knowledge of the pre-eternal, immaterial light of the Lord's transfiguration, to His glory and the glory of His Father without beginning and the life-giving Spirit, whose radiance, divinity, glory, kingdom and power are one and the same, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY THIRTY-FIVE

Another on the Transfiguration of the Lord[535]

IN WHICH IT IS DEMONSTRATED THAT ALTHOUGH
THE DIVINE LIGHT OF THE TRANSFIGURATION IS UNCREATED
IT IS NOT GOD'S ESSENCE

THE PROPHET ISAIAH FORETOLD in respect of the gospel that, "The Lord will give a concise word on the earth" (*cf.* Isa. 10:23 LXX). A concise word[536] is an utterance containing an abundance of meaning in a few phrases. So let us look again at the Gospel passage, which we examined earlier, and add what we left out, that we may take our fill of the incorruptible meaning stored up in it, and all receive divine inspiration.

2. "At that time Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun" (Matt. 17:1–2, *cf.* Mark 9:2–3). "Behold, now is the acceptable time", brethren, "now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2, *cf.* Isa. 49:8), a divine, new and eternal day, not measured in hours, never lengthening or shortening, uninterrupted by night. For us it is the day of the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2), with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (Jas. 1:17). That Sun, since the day when, by the good pleasure of the Father and the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, He lovingly shone upon us and led us "out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9), continues without setting to shine upon us for ever.

3. As the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2) and truth, He does not consent to give light to, or be known perfectly by, those who cultivate lying and either extol injustice or demonstrate it in their deeds. But He

shines upon those who act righteously and love truth, is believed by them, and delights them with His rays. Therefore the Scripture says, "Light has dawned for the righteous, and its companion, gladness" (*cf.* Ps. 97:11 LXX). And the psalmist and prophet also sings to God, "Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name" (Ps. 89:12), foretelling the joy that those who later saw that illumination would experience. Isaiah tells us "to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free" (Isa. 58:6). What then? "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall compass thee" (Isa. 58:8 LXX). Again he says, "If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke and the stretching forth of the hand, and murmuring speech, and if thou give bread to the hungry from thy heart, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in darkness, and thy darkness shall be as noonday" (Isa. 58:9–10 LXX). For that Sun makes other suns of those upon whom it brightly shines. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43).

4. Let us cast off, brethren, the works of darkness, and let us perform the works of light, that we may not only walk honestly, as in the day (*cf.* Rom. 13:12–13), but also become children of the day (1 Thess. 5:5). And come, let us go up the mountain where Christ shone forth, that we may see what happened there. Or rather, if we become children worthy of that day, the Word of God Himself will take us up when the time comes. Now, I beseech you, strive to lift up the eyes of your understanding towards the light of the gospel message, that you may be transformed by the renewing of your mind (*cf.* Rom. 12:2), and having acquired the divine brightness from above, be conformed to the likeness of the glory of the Lord (*cf.* Rom. 8:29), whose face shone like the sun today on the mountain.

5. In what way like the sun? There was a time when sunlight was not contained within the disc of the sun, for the light was made first, whereas the Creator of all formed the sun on the fourth day, kindling its light and making it the source of daylight and a luminary to shine by day (Gen. 1:14–19). Similarly, the light of the Godhead was not always contained in Christ's body, for that light existed always without beginning, whereas the human body which the Son of God assumed from us was made later for our sake, receiving the fullness of the Godhead, and so being kindled as a deifying and divinely radiant

source of illumination. Christ's face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as the light. "Shining", says Mark, "exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them" (Mark 9:3).

6. Both Christ's venerable body and His clothes were radiant with the same light, but not equally so. His face shone like the sun, but His clothes became bright through contact with His body, and in this way He showed us what those robes of glory will be like, which those who are near God will wear in the age to come, and what those garments of sinlessness were like, which Adam took off because of his transgression, appearing naked and ashamed (*cf.* Gen. 3:10). "The fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering", says the divine Luke, regarding everything that happened as beyond comparison (Luke 9:29). Mark, however, describes Christ's clothes as shining exceeding white as snow, but by this comparison he demonstrates that images and illustrations fall short of conveying the appearance of those garments. Snow is indeed white, but it does not shine, because its surface is always uneven, being entirely composed of small bubbles because of the air mixed into it. When a cloud can neither stay whole nor expel the air it holds, it freezes because of the extreme cold, and falls full of air, resembling foam in its whiteness and unevenness.

7. As snow's whiteness is inadequate to depict how delightful that sight was, the evangelist added the word "shining" to show that the light which made those clothes glistening white was supernatural. It is not a property of light to render the objects it illuminates sparkling and white, but to show up what colour they are. This light, however, apparently revealed, or rather, transformed, the things it shone upon, which visible light cannot do. Even more mysterious is the fact that, even though they were changed, at the same time the light kept them unaltered, as will soon become clear. How could the light with which we are familiar do all this? The evangelist, to indicate that not only the extraordinary radiance and loveliness of the Lord's face was above nature, but also the beauty of His clothes, takes them beyond the bounds of natural beauty by adding the description, "shining" to "white as snow". Then, since skill can also seem to enhance natural beauty, he sets this loveliness above artificial beautification by saying, "so as no fuller on earth can white them" (Mark 9:3).

8. The pre-eternal Word, who became flesh for our sake, the enhypostatic Wisdom of the Father,[537] also bears within Himself the word of the gospel proclamation. The writing of this message is like

a garment, white and clear, but also shining and radiant like pearls, or better put, full of divine worth and inspiration for those who regard the things of the Spirit spiritually, expound the written words in a way worthy of God, and demonstrate that the phrases of the gospel's preaching are such that no fuller on earth, that is to say, none of the wise men of this age, can make them clearer. But why even mention elucidating these words? Such a person cannot even understand them when someone else explains. "The natural man", as the apostle tells us, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit: neither can he know them" (1 Cor. 2:14). As a result he wrongly interprets instances of divine and spiritual radiance, which lie far beyond the reaches of the human mind, as natural light, "intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Col. 2:18).

9. When Peter's understanding had been illuminated by that most blessed sight, he was raised to a greater love and longing for God, and did not want to be separated from that light. "It is good for us to be here", he said to the Lord, "If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias" (Matt. 17:4), not knowing what he was saying (*cf.* Mark 9:6). The time for all things to be restored[538] had not yet come, but even when it does, we shall not need tents made by hand. Nor should the Master be put on the same level as His servants by them all having similar dwellings. As His true Son, Christ is in the bosom of the Father, whereas the prophets, as true sons of Abraham, will dwell, as is fitting, in Abraham's bosom. As Peter spoke these words, without realizing what he was saying, "Behold a bright cloud overshadowed them" (Matt. 17:5), interrupting his words and making clear what sort of tabernacle was appropriate for Christ. But what was this Cloud, and, if it was bright, why did it overshadow them? Was it not the unapproachable light in which God dwells,[539] and with which He covers Himself as with a garment? (Ps. 104:2). "He who maketh the clouds his chariot", as the Scriptures say (Ps. 104:3), and "made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him" (Ps. 18:11). And as the apostle says, "He who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16). Thus on this occasion the same phenomenon was both light and darkness,[540] overshadowing because of its exceeding brightness.

10. But the holy theologians bear witness that even the light which was visible earlier to the apostles' eyes was unapproachable. "Today", says one of them, "is the abyss of unapproachable light,

today the unlimited outpouring of divine radiance is clearly seen by the apostles on Mount Tabor."[541] And the great Dionysius, having stated that the unapproachable light, in which God is said to dwell, is darkness, says "It is here that everyone found worthy of knowing and seeing God comes".[542] It follows that the light, which the apostles saw shining from the Lord's face, was the same as the bright Cloud, which later overshadowed them. But in the first instance, because it appeared more dimly, it could be seen, whereas later it shone so much more strongly that it was invisible to them on account of its overwhelming brilliance, and thus it overshadowed Christ, the fount of divine, eternal light and the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2). For the one and same light of the visible sun allows us to see by its rays, but also takes away our sight if we look directly at it, since its brilliance exceeds the measure of our eyes.

11. The visible sun shines as is natural to it; not by its own will, nor only on those it wishes. Christ, however, the Sun of truth and righteousness (*cf.* Mal. 4:2), not only possesses the divine nature with its natural radiance and glory, but also the divine will which is in keeping with these,[543] and He illuminates only those He wishes, and to the extent that He chooses, providentially for their salvation. When He so willed, He shone like the sun and was seen by the apostles' eyes, though not for long. Then when He chose to shine more brilliantly, He was invisible to them on account of His exceeding splendour, as though He had entered a bright Cloud. A voice was heard from the Cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5). After the Lord was baptized in the Jordan the heavens were opened and the same voice came out of that glory (Matt. 3:16–17); that glory which Stephen later saw when, full of the Spirit, the heavens opened to him, and he looked up (Acts 7:55–56). Now this voice is heard out of the Cloud overshadowing Jesus, so this Cloud must be the same as God's celestial glory. How, then, can this heavenly light be a normal, visible light?

12. The Father's voice from the Cloud taught that all things before the coming of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, the sacrifices, the proclamation of laws, the adoption of sons, were imperfect and were neither established nor performed according to the will of God at that time, but were permitted because of the advent and manifestation of the Lord that was to come. He is the beloved Son, in whom God is well pleased (*cf.* Matt. 17:5), upon whom He rests and

with whom He is completely satisfied. So He exhorts us to listen to His Son and obey Him. If He says "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life", listen to Him (Matt. 7:13–14). And if He tells you that this light is the kingdom of God, hear Him and believe Him, and make yourselves worthy of such a light.

13. When the bright Cloud appeared and the voice of the Father sounded forth from it, the disciples, it says, fell on their faces (Matt. 17:6). This was not on account of the voice, because the same had happened on many other occasions, not just at the Jordan, but also in Jerusalem when the saving passion was at hand. For the Lord said, "Father, glorify thy name. Then came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:28). The whole multitude heard this, but none of them fell to the ground. But here there was not just a voice, but with the voice limitless light blazed forth. That is why the God-bearing Fathers rightly recognized that the disciples fell on their faces, not because of the voice, but because of that extraordinary supernatural light.[544] As Mark tells us, they were frightened even before the voice came (Mark 9:6), obviously on account of the divine manifestation.

14. But when, for all these reasons, it clearly appeared that this light is divine, supernatural and uncreated, what befalls those who are excessively taken up with secular, non-spiritual learning, and who are incapable of understanding the things of the Spirit? They fall down a different chasm, for they say that the light is not the divine glory, nor the kingdom of God, His beauty, His grace, or His radiance, as we have been taught by God and the theologians, but affirm instead that what they formerly claimed was visible and created light is God's essence.[545] In the Gospels the Lord tells us that this glory is shared not only by Himself and the Father, but also by the holy angels. As the godly Luke writes, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26). Consequently, those who assert that this glory is God's essence, say that the essence of both God and the angels is the same, which is the extreme limit of profanity.

15. Not only angels, but the saints among men are partakers in this glory and the kingdom. But whereas the Father and the Son with the divine Spirit have this glory and kingdom by nature, holy angels

and men have them by grace, receiving radiance from that source. The fact that both Moses and Elijah were seen with the Lord in the same glory proves this to us (Matt. 17:3). Nor was it just on Tabor that Moses appeared as a partaker in God's splendour, but also on that occasion when his face was so glorified that the Israelites could not look at it (Exod. 34:29–30, 2 Cor. 3:7). This is demonstrated by the theologian who said that Moses received the Father's immortal glory in his mortal face,[546] and by another who contradicted Eunomius, when the latter said that "the glory of the Almighty was not passed on to the Son",[547] by saying that "even if they were speaking about Moses, he could not tolerate such a statement".[548]

16. The glory, kingdom and radiance shared by God and His saints are one and the same. That is why the psalmist and prophet sings, "Let the brightness[549] of the Lord our God be upon us" (Ps. 90:17 Lxx). But no one has yet dared to say that God shares one and the same essence with His saints. The one divine splendour is seen now on the mountain to be common to the Word's divinity and His flesh, but that His divinity and flesh have a common essence is an assertion of Eutyches and Dioscorus,[550] not of those who wish to be godly. All will see that glory and brightness when the Lord appears, shining from the east to the west (*cf.* Matt. 24:27), but those who went up with Jesus have seen them already. Nobody, however, has stood in the substance and essence of God (*cf.* Jer. 23:18 Lxx), and seen or declared His nature.[551] The divine light is given by measure and is received to a greater or lesser extent, being distributed, undividedly divided,[552] according to the worthiness of the recipients. The proof of this is near at hand. Whereas the Lord's face shone more than the sun, His clothes became shining and white as snow. Both Moses and Elijah were seen in this same glory, but neither of them shone like the sun. And the disciples themselves were able to see that light, but not to gaze at it.

17. Thus is this light measured out and distributed, while remaining entire,[553] and is received more by some, less by others. It is known partly now, partly later, so Paul says, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part" (1 Cor. 13:9). By contrast, God's essence is absolutely indivisible and incomprehensible, and no other being can receive it, either to a greater or lesser extent. Only the accursed Messalians think otherwise,[554] supposing that God's essence can be seen by those among them who are worthy. We, however, turn aside from

heretics of earlier ages and our own and believe, as we were taught, that the divine kingdom, glory, splendour, ineffable light, and divine grace can be seen and shared by the saints, but not God's essence. So let us make our way towards the radiance of the light of grace, that we may acknowledge and venerate the threefold Godhead, who shines with a single indescribable radiance from one nature in three persons. Let us lift up the eyes of our understanding to the Word who now sits, with His body, above the vaults of heaven. And He who sits in divine splendour on the right hand of majesty, utters these words to us as if from afar, "If anyone wants to stand in the presence of this glory, let him imitate Me as far as he can, and follow the way and the manner of life I taught on earth".

18. Let us look with our inner eyes at this great spectacle, our nature, which dwells for all eternity with the immaterial fire of the divinity. And let us take off the coats of skins (*cf.* Gen. 3:21), the earthy and carnal ways of thinking, in which we were clothed because of our transgression, and stand on holy ground (*cf.* Exod. 3:5), each one of us hallowing our own ground by means of virtue and reaching up to God. In this way we shall have boldness when God comes in light, and as we run to Him we shall be enlightened, and, once illumined, shall live for ever to the glory of the one brightness in three Suns, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY THIRTY-SIX

On Saint Matthew's Gospel For the Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost About the Parable Which says "The Kingdom of Heaven is Likened Unto a Certain King, Which Would Take an Account Of His Servants"[555]

ALSO ON FORGIVENESS OF WRONGS[556] AND COMPASSION[557]

WHEN GOD FORMED MAN WITH FREE WILL,[558] He deigned to make careful provision for him so that, by using his freedom rightly, he would incline not towards evil, but towards the good. From the very beginning He made him in His own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26), that looking towards his good archetype, man might not fall away from goodness, and God might thereafter justly show him, as His own image, the riches of His kindness to a greater extent than He would to the rest of His creatures. Thus would He draw man more and more towards goodness commensurate and compatible with His own. It is possible for man, by imitating His Creator, to be good in His image, though no one can equal God in goodness.

2. Observe how many great gifts God has bestowed on us, and that He presents Himself to us as an example of active kindness. I shall pass over for the present those natural benefits which He has given us from birth. Looking just at these, David said to God, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain

to it" (Ps. 139:6). I shall, however, briefly mention those gifts which surround us from without. All things visible and invisible God made for man's sake. Nor was it just the heavens, the earth, water, air, fire, and everything they contain, and all the species of animals and plants, which we cannot enumerate in detail, that He made for man, but also the multitude of different kinds of angels (*cf.* Col. 1:16),[559] some of whom He appointed to guide the world and lead the nations, as God's prophets, who learnt these things from Him, tell us (Dan. 10:13),[560] and others, to be ministers for the sake of those who are to inherit eternal salvation, as the great Paul, who also was taught by God, revealed to us (Heb. 1:14). But why speak only of His creatures? For our sake He made Himself man. What speech can express the words He Himself uttered for us, His way of life, the virtues He taught us, the greatness of the miracles which He did for us? By far the greatest miracle of all was that He gave Himself over to death for our sake, rose again and ascended for us, He who, as God, lives and has His Being eternally in heaven, and is everywhere and above all,[561] who was before all ages and continues throughout all ages and beyond.

3. Mercy was the source of all He did for us. What else but love for mankind, charity and mercy moved Him to bestow such great benefits upon us? There are two aspects of this mercy. Before we sinned against Him, He mercifully made up for what was deficient in our nature with His many bounties. Then after we transgressed, He was not only constantly forbearing, but in His abundant compassion He continually gave us more and better gifts and led us onwards. He did not requite evil for evil, nor did He just give good for evil, but the most excellent of good things, greater and nobler than all else. Afterwards, He gave Himself for our sake, which of all goods is the first, and greatest, and most excellent, or rather that which is uniquely good and beyond compare.

4. Mercy is therefore a twofold virtue. On the one hand, it means giving shelter, protection, food, and necessary aid to those in want. On the other, it is patience, forgiveness of wrongs, and compassion towards those who offend.[562] When the Son of God became man for our sake and deigned to be our teacher, He led us towards the first kind of mercy, which consists of sharing our possessions, by saying, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matt. 5:42), and, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and

where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:20), and again elsewhere, "Give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you" (Luke 11:41).

5. Urging us to give to others, not just by these words but also with a parable, He brings before our eyes that terrible future advent, and shows us Himself as King sitting upon His throne of glory (Matt. 25:31–46). He sets those who have been generous on His right hand, as they have acted rightly. The rest He sets on His left, reproaches them for not giving, calls them cursed, as though by failing to help the needy they had shown unkindness to Him Himself, and dispatches them into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. As for those who have been generous, He praises them openly, and accepts their benevolence to the poor as if it had been offered to Himself. He bears witness that they have His Father's blessing, and makes them heirs of the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. By making such statements in the Gospels the Lord urges us towards one type of mercy, giving alms to those in need.

6. But what does He say about mercy's other aspect, forbearance and compassion towards those who have wronged us? "Recompense no man evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17), but "overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). "Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned" (Luke 6:37). And, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (*cf.* Matt. 6:14–15). As in the case of the first type of mercy, He used words of exhortation and also spurred us on by means of what would happen when He sat before us as Shepherd and King, so in the case of forgiveness of wrongs and compassion He not only spoke the words to which we have referred, but also went on to give us a parable, which was read to you today from the Gospel, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents" (Matt. 18:23–24).

7. He is here referring to His Father as a man who is a king, just as He refers to Himself as such when He speaks of the end of the world (Matt. 13:40–41; and 16:28).[563] Although the Father is likened to a human being, this is only by way of a parable. Christ Himself, however, was not just likened to a man in a parable, but was actually made man like us. Of course, the Son and the Father have the same throne and the same kingdom, but since, in His words about doing good to our

neighbour, the Lord said, "I was an hungered", "I was thirsty", and so on, and called the destitute His brethren (*cf.* Matt. 25:35–40), in addition to making other allusions to His Incarnation, that is why He speaks of Himself there as the King sitting before us. And by referring to sheep and goats in that parable, He set Himself before us as King and Shepherd. Here, by contrast, as He makes mention of servants, accounts, and money from the royal treasury, He is speaking of His Father sitting before us, balancing accounts and calling in debts.

8. Why is it that the first passage says the king shall sit, the nations shall be gathered, He shall separate them and shall speak, with everything in the future tense (Matt. 25:31–46), whereas here the kingdom is likened to a king who wanted to settle accounts, the debtor was brought, and the Lord gave orders, with all the words referring to the past (Matt. 18:23–35)? Because those things related in the former parable belong to the age to come, whereas most of the events in this one take place here and now. When the man owing ten thousand talents was brought before the king, without being able to pay, "His Lord", it says, "commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made" (Matt. 18:25). But when he fell down, asked him to have patience and promised to pay, the Lord was moved with compassion, released him and forgave him the debt. In the age to come there will be no such thing as postponement, promises from the debtor, settlement of debts, or any sort of forgiveness from the giver of all, who will demand an account of all.

9. Even the fact that the man owing ten thousand talents was brought when the king began balancing accounts is not compatible with the age to come. Then all things will come to an end, whereas here they are just beginning. The subsequent events in the parable also belong to the present. "But the same servant went out", it says, "and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest" (Matt. 18:28). And when the fellow-servant fell down before him, pleading with him and promising to pay, he was not in the least merciful, but went and threw him into prison, until he should pay all he owed. What way out will there be when that time comes? What debts will then be owed to fellow-servants? Will payment be demanded or attacks made? "And his fellowservant", it says, "fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison till he should

pay the debt" (Matt. 18:29–30). In the age to come we shall not suffer violence from one another, nor shall we fall down one before the other with entreaties. For then there will be one before whom "every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth" (*cf.* Phil. 2:10). But the other fellow-servants, it says, were very sorry on account of the man's heartlessness to his fellow-servant, and told their lord all that had happened. He angrily accused the pitiless servant, and handed him over to the tormentors, until he should pay all that he owed (Matt. 18:31–34).

10. Although you could see this final incident as happening in the present, it belongs more to the future. Then the accusation will be public, the sentence without mercy and the torture neverending: "till", it says, "he should pay all that was due to him". It is absolutely impossible for payment equivalent to our debts towards God to be obtained from us. So "till he should pay all" means he was tormented for ever. But how do all the earlier elements in the parable take place here and now: the king's court, the accusation of debtors, the subsequent demand for repayment and condemnation, then forgiveness, followed by condemnation once more, and all the rest? This church of God is like another heaven within the holy veil (*cf.* Heb. 6:19; 9:3ff), which, like the tabernacles beyond the heavens, holds the royal throne on which the King of all sits and invisibly settles His accounts with His servants, all of us who stand round about and pray.

11. Many, myself included, are reproached by God through the words we hear sung and read in this place, because we have not put these ten thousand (*cf.* Matt. 18:24), meaning this large number of words, to good use, each of which is a talent, as it carries a great and heavy punishment.[564] Cain apparently committed one sin by killing his brother, but according to Scripture, vengeance was taken on him sevenfold, that is to say, many times (*cf.* Gen. 4:15). We are not just accused of being in debt, but learn from the divine words about the punishments stored up for the guilty. When we hear of these matters, for as long as we remain in church, we repent, prostrate ourselves, make entreaties, promise to live as pleases God from now on, and even obtain forgiveness, when we have stayed here until the end in fervent supplication. As the Scripture says, "Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you" (Zech. 1:3), and "I will remember your sin no more" (*cf.* Jer. 31:34).

12. Afterwards, when we come out of church and meet people who have wronged us, who sometimes fall down before us and beseech us, we are severe, merciless and implacable towards them, even though their sins towards us are not worth a penny in comparison with our own sins against God, which are measured in huge numbers of talents. The Lord pitied us when we repented, and forgave us much, but when He sees how heartless and unyielding we are to our fellows, His wrath is justly kindled against us, and He delivers us up to unendurable torments, both temptations here, and unending future punishments, in accordance with the words of the Truth Himself. "So likewise", says the Lord, "shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matt. 18:35). What is even more terrible is that we shall find, alas, that God's true servants, the holy angels and the saints, whom we hope by our prayers here to have as ambassadors and intercessors to God on our behalf, will be inciting Him against us, if in this present life we fail to show compassion to those who offend against us. This is because the holy angels and saints are those whom, as we learned earlier, with great sorrow denounce to the Lord our hard and merciless frame of mind.[565] We were correct in saying at the outset that the king and judge of whom the Lord speaks in this parable is His Father. For He does not say here that He Himself will deliver the cruel man to the tormentors, but that His heavenly Father will do so.

13. Brethren, let us be afraid of the zeal of the saints against us on that day. Let us tremble at the divine sentence, and respect God's earlier patience towards us. Let us reckon up how much we owe God, compared with other people's debts towards us. "How oft", Peter asked the Lord, "shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" And he heard in reply, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:21–22), although it is almost impossible for our brother to wrong us so often. But each of us has sinned more frequently than that against God. If you look carefully at how great one sin is, bearing in mind against whom it is committed, you will find it incomparably worse than all your brother's sins, be they seventy times seven.

14. Seeing that you owe so many weighty talents to God, and as soon as you asked Him to be patient, your debt was written off, if you are then asked by a fellow-servant to be forbearing over a small debt of silver coins (which is what "pence" means), will you not eagerly

comply? Otherwise the whole amount will be rightly demanded from you. How can it be unjust for you to suffer the loss of everything as well as receiving condemnation for your ingratitude? For that reason one of the prophets says, "As thou hast done, so shall it be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head" (Obad. 15). Let us not, brethren, wait for God's accusation, wrath and judgment, but let us put on, as the apostle says, "bowels of mercies" (Col. 3:12). By showing compassion in our words and deeds, let us, as the same apostle teaches, "be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another", if we have a complaint against anyone, "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). In this way, the grace of Christ will surely be with us, and will, moreover, be an earnest of the unspeakable promise to come.

15. The man who wrongs us causes us so many benefits, if we are willing, that I regard him as a richly laden merchant-ship easily capable of paying off our debt of ten thousand talents and of guaranteeing future riches. I inwardly perceive him as the spiritual equivalent of what we recently witnessed with our own eyes in this city. The barbarians attacked, besieged the town, and cut off vital supplies from inland, posing the grave threat that they would conquer us through lack of essential provisions. But then a vessel laden with many tons of wheat appeared and landed in our harbours, making the barbarians' threat ineffectual, lowering the price of food, and also providing us with a store of necessary supplies for the future.[566]

16. In the same way, the spiritual enemy of all Christian people, who is far more savage than any barbarian, invisibly attacks us. He cuts off the soul on all sides from everything it needs for salvation, surrounds it with a dearth of virtue, crushes it with despair because of its lack of good deeds, and so conquers and destroys it. Then, obviously, by the providence of the Saviour of sinners, someone comes along who has wronged us and needs our compassion, and when he has received it from us, he makes all the devil's malice against us of no effect, reconciles us with God, offers us abundant supplies of mercy and salvation, and gives us a promise of eternal life.

17. May we all attain to this through the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belong all glory, power, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and His all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY THIRTY-SEVEN

On the Most Venerable Dormition Of Our Exceedingly Pure Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary[567]

BOTH LONGING AND OBLIGATION compose my homily today to your charity. It is not just my desire out of love for you and my duty under sacred laws to fill your pious ears with saving words to nourish your souls, but there is also nothing dearer or more necessary for me than to expound with due honour in church the wonders of the ever-virgin Mother of God. This longing, not single but twofold, persuades, beseeches, and encourages me, whereas inescapable duty compels me. Words, however, cannot attain to what is beyond speech, just as eyes cannot stare at the sun. But though it is impossible for us to tell of things surpassing words, we can, by the love of those we extol, sing their praises, and we may use words to pay our debt, and express our longing for the Mother of God in hymns as best we can, without in any way touching the intangible.

2. If "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Ps. 116:15), and "the memory of the just is praised" (Prov. 10:7 LXX), how much more fitting is it for us to celebrate with highest honours the memory of the ever-virgin Mother of God, the Holy of Holies, through whom the saints receive their hallowing?[568] That is exactly what we are doing today by commemorating her holy dormition and passing away, through which, having been made a little lower than the angels (*cf.* Ps. 8:5), she rose incomparably higher than the angels, archangels, and all the heavenly powers above them, because of her

nearness to the God of all (*cf.* Rom. 9:5), and the marvels written of old which were accomplished in her.

3. On her account there were divine predictions by prophets inspired by God. Miracles foreshadowed the great future wonder of the world, the ever-virgin Mother of God. Nations and circumstances were transformed to make way for the fulfilment of the new mystery concerning her. Spiritual ordinances prefigured in all sorts of ways the truth that was to be. The culmination, or rather the beginning and foundation of subsequent marvellous events, was the accomplishment of God's promise to Joachim and Anna, the most virtuous people of their day, that, although childless from their youth, they would have a child in their extreme old age, and that their daughter would bear without seed Him whom God the Father had begotten before all ages, outside time. In addition, those who were to become parents in this mysterious way vowed to give back the child, who was to give birth herself even more mysteriously, to the giver of the gift. In accordance with this worthiest of vows, the Mother of God left her father's house in extraordinary fashion while still an infant, to live in God's house. For the space of many years she stayed there, strange as it seems, in the Holy of Holies, provided with indescribable nourishment by attending angels: food, which Adam never reached the point of tasting, otherwise he would not have fallen away from life;[569] as was the case with the all-pure Virgin, who now passes from earth to heaven – even though for Adam's sake and to show herself his daughter, she, like her Son, yielded for a short time to nature.[570]

4. After this unutterable nourishment came the mysterious divine plan for the Virgin's betrothal, the strange, inexplicable greeting of the archangel who flew down from on high, and God's messages and salutations,[571] which reversed Adam and Eve's condemnation, and healed the curse which was upon them, turning it into a blessing (Luke 1:28–38). For the King of all desired the secret beauty of the Ever-Virgin, as David foretold (*cf.* Ps. 45:11). He bowed the heavens and came down (Ps. 18:9), and overshadowed her (*cf.* Luke 1:35), rather, the power of the Most High came to dwell in her in His very person.[572] He did not reveal His presence through darkness and fire, as He did to Moses (*cf.* Exod. 19:16, 18), nor through a tempest and cloud, as He did to Elijah (*cf.* 1 Kgs. 18:45), but the unveiled power of the Most High directly overshadowed the Virgin's perfectly pure womb with nothing intervening, neither the air of earth or heaven,

nor anything visible or invisible. For this was not overshadowing, but pure union.[573]

5. Since anything that overshadows something else naturally gives it its own form and character, what came to pass in the Virgin's womb was not just union but the formation, out of both the power of the Most High and her all-holy virgin womb, of the incarnate Word of God. The Word of God in the flesh made His abode in her, came forth from her, "and appeared on earth and went about among men".[574] He made our human nature divine, and bestowed on us, according to the holy apostle, "things the angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12). Such is the extraordinary honour and all-surpassing glory of the Ever-Virgin, which defeats the mind and speech of all, however angelic they be. Again, what words can express the events that followed this indescribable birth? Co-operating with, and sharing in the sufferings of, the self-emptying of the Word of God (*cf.* Phil. 2:7), which was accomplished through her, and led to His exaltation, she was justly glorified and lifted up with Him,[575] constantly adding great gifts to the extraordinary ones already bestowed upon her. Even after He who took flesh from her ascended into heaven, it was as though she was striving to emulate the great works past understanding and speech which He had wrought in her, through patient endurance in all kinds of asceticism, through prayers and exertions for the whole world, and counsels and exhortations for those going to the ends of the earth to preach.[576] She was the sole support and consolation of all who saw or heard her, assisting by various means in the proclamation of the gospel. Thus she showed that her whole life, her behaviour, her mind and her words, were utterly devoted to godly striving.

6. As a result of this, her death, too, was life-giving[577] and led to heavenly, immortal life, and its day of remembrance is a joyful holiday and worldwide festival. Not only does it renew the memory of the wonders of the Mother of God, it also commemorates the unheard-of way in which all the holy apostles were gathered from every country to her sacred funeral, the hymns of divine revelation sung on that occasion by these inspired men, the attendance of angels, singing and ministering around her. They escorted her and followed behind, they aided or opposed, protected and defended, and with all their might assisted in deed and song, those who in any way reverenced that body which had held God and is the starting-point of life, the saving remedy of our human race, solemnly chosen from the whole creation. On the other

hand, they secretly fought and opposed the Jews when they insulted her and rebelled against God in thought and deed.[578] The Lord of Hosts, meanwhile, the Son of the Ever-Virgin, was invisibly present, honouring His Mother's departure. Into His hands she entrusted her God-bearing spirit, and through Him her body, her spirit's companion, was soon translated into a heavenly place of eternal life, as rightly befits her whole life from the very beginning.[579]

7. In ancient times there were many who attained to divine favour, glory, and power. As David says, "How precious also are thy friends unto me, O God! How great is their authority! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand" (Ps. 139:17–18 LXX). According to Solomon, "Many have acquired riches, and many daughters have acted with power, but she excels and outdoes them all", to an inexpressible degree (*cf.* Prov. 31:29). Standing between God and the whole human race, she alone made God a son of man, and men sons of God, rendered the earth heaven and made mankind divine. She alone among women was declared the Mother of God by nature transcending every nature. Through her unutterable childbearing she became Queen of all creation in this world and beyond, and through herself she raised up those below her, and made her subjects heavenly instead of earthly. She shared in the noblest honour, the most sublime power and the ordination bestowed from heaven through the divine Spirit (*cf.* Acts 1:14; 2:1–4), and was set high above all, the supremely blessed Queen of a blessed race.

8. Today she has moved[580] from earth to heaven, and now has heaven too as a fitting dwelling-place, a palace meet for her. She has stood on the right hand of the King of all, clothed in vesture wrought with gold, and arrayed in divers colours, as the psalmist and prophet says of her (*cf.* Ps. 45:9 LXX); and you should take this garment interwoven with gold to mean her divinely radiant body, adorned with every type of virtue. For at present she is the only one who has a place in heaven with her divinely glorified body in the company of her Son. Earth, the grave and death could not ultimately detain her life-giving body, which has held God and been a more beloved habitation for Him than heaven and the heaven of heavens. For if a soul which has the grace of God dwelling within it goes up to heaven when released from this world, as we believe and is evident on many accounts, how can that body which not only received within it the pre-eternal, only-begotten Son of God, the ever-flowing fount of grace, but was also plainly seen to bear Him, fail to be taken up from earth to heaven?

Could she who, when only three years old, before the heavenly child had dwelt within her and been clothed by her in flesh, lived in the Holy of Holies,[581] and who became excellent and truly heavenly even in her body through many great works, afterwards become earth subject to corruption? How could this seem reasonable to people who take a rational view?

9. It was right, therefore, that the body which brought forth the Son should be glorified with Him in divine glory, and that the ark of Christ's holiness should arise with Him who rose on the third day, as the prophet sang (*cf.* Ps. 132:8 Lxx). The linen cloths and winding-sheets left behind in the tomb, which were all that those who came to look for her found there, proved to the disciples that she too had risen from the dead,[582] just as was earlier the case with her Son and Lord (*cf.* Luke 24:12, John 20:5–7). It was not, however, necessary for her, as it was for her Son and God, to stay for a while longer on earth, so she was taken up directly from the grave to the heavenly realm,[583] whence she sends bright shafts of holy light and grace down to earth, illuminating all the space around the world, and is venerated, admired, and hymned by all the faithful.

10. It is as though God wanted to set up an icon of everything good and, in so doing, to display His own image clearly to angels and men, and thus He made her so truly beautiful. Bringing together all the various means He had used to adorn all creation, He made her a world of everything good, both visible and invisible. Or rather, He revealed her as the synthesis of divine, angelic and human loveliness, a nobler beauty to embellish both worlds, originating from the earth but reaching up, through her ascension now from the tomb to heaven, to the heavens and beyond. She united things below with things above, and embraces the whole of creation with the wonders surrounding her. The fact that she tasted death, which, as I mentioned in the beginning, meant she was a little lower than the angels,[584] increases the universal excellence of the Mother of God. That is why all things rightly join together to rejoice at the celebration today of this event.

11. It is fitting that she, who held Him who fills all things and is above all things, should herself outstrip all, and become higher than all in her virtues and great honour. She embraces in their entirety the virtues which, distributed among the noblest of every age, were sufficient to make them great, and the various graces with which angels and men have individually been favoured by God, and perfects them

all in herself alone with inexpressible excellence. Also, she is superior to everyone in that after death she became immortal, and she alone lives in her body with her Son and God in heaven. Thence she pours down abundant grace on those who honour her and bestows on them the possibility of reaching up to her, the receptacle of such great graces, who lavishes the highest benefits upon us in her goodness, and never ceases to yield a rich harvest and plentiful gifts for us. Anyone observing her help and generosity in everything good would say that, for those who live virtuously, the Virgin radiates virtue as the sun radiates visible light for those dwelling below. But were you to shift your mental gaze to the Sun who marvellously shone forth to mankind from her, and who possesses by His very nature everything bestowed on her by grace, and far more besides, then the Virgin would immediately seem like heaven to you. Having a far more abundant share in God's good things than all other recipients of His grace in heaven or below, she is as much greater than them as the heavens are greater than the sun, though the Sun is brighter.[585]

12. What words can describe your divinely-radiant beauty, O Virgin Mother of God? We cannot circumscribe you in our words and thoughts, for everything about you surpasses our speech and understanding. But, with your loving permission, we may sing your praises. In you all graces find a place. You are the fullness of everything noble and good, a living picture and icon of all goodness and kindness, for you alone were found worthy of the gifts of the Spirit in their entirety, or rather, you alone had mysteriously dwelling in your womb Him in whom all these gifts were stored. In a way past understanding, you became His tabernacle, and now through death you proceed hence to immortality, and are fittingly translated from earth to heaven, to live with Him for ever in the heavenly tabernacles. From there you care for your inheritance, and by your unsleeping intercessions you reconcile us to your Son.

13. The Mother of God is so much closer to God than others who draw near to Him that she is able to intercede more powerfully than any of them, and by this I mean not just human beings but even all the ranks of angels. Isaiah writes of the highest order of angels in heaven, "And the seraphim stood round about him" (Isa. 6:2 LXX), whereas David says of the Mother of God, "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen" (Ps. 45:9). Do you notice the difference in their standing? You can also see from this the difference in honour between the seraphim's

rank and hers, for the seraphim are "round about" God, but only the Queen of all stands beside Him. She is admired and praised by God Himself, as though He were extolling her to the powers around Him in the words used in the Song of Songs, "How beautiful is my companion!" (*cf.* S. of S. 4:1; 6:4 LXX). She is more brilliant than light, she blossoms more beautifully than the gardens of divine paradise, and she is more delightfully adorned than the visible and invisible worlds. It is fitting that she stands not just beside God, but on His right hand, for where Christ sat in heaven, namely, on the right hand of the majesty (Heb. 1:3), there she now stands, having ascended from earth to heaven.[586] Nor is this solely because no one longs for Christ as she does, and no one is so longed for in return, which would be in accordance with the laws of nature,[587] but because she is truly His throne; and where the King sits, there stands the throne.

14. Isaiah saw this throne in the midst of the choir of cherubim, and described it as "high and lifted up" (Isa. 6:1), thus indicating that the Mother of God had risen higher than the heavenly powers. For that reason he refers to the angels themselves glorifying God for her and saying, "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place" (Ezek. 3:12). The patriarch Jacob, seeing obscure glimpses of this throne, said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen. 28:17). Elsewhere, David, uniting in himself all the multitude of the saved, and using as different strings or notes all those brought together from diverse races into one faith by the Ever-Virgin, plays a most harmonious song to her, with the words, "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever, even for ever and ever" (Ps. 45:17).

15. Notice how all creation praises the Virgin Mother, not just in past times, but "for ever, even for ever and ever". From this we can see that she will never cease doing good to the whole of creation, not just to the human race, but also to the immaterial supernatural hosts of angels. The fact that they, like us, partake of and touch the intangible divine nature only through her is clearly shown by Isaiah. For he did not see the seraphim taking the live coal directly off the altar, but picking it up with tongs, which he also used to touch his prophetic lips to purify them (Isa. 6:6–7). This vision of the tongs is the same as that great vision which Moses saw of the bush burning with fire but not consumed (Exod. 3:2). Is there anyone who is unaware that the Virgin Mother is both that bush and those tongs, which held the

divine fire without being burnt; for was it not to this very mystery that the archangel ministered at her conception, which united through her the one who takes away the sin of the world with the race of men, and which, through this indescribable union, has thoroughly cleansed us? She alone stands at the border between created and uncreated nature, and no one can come to God unless he is truly illumined by her, the true lamp of divine radiance. "For God is in the midst of her", says the Scripture, "she shall not be moved" (Ps. 46:5).

16. God requites us according to the measure of our love for Him, and he who loves the Son is loved by Him and by His Father, and becomes a place for them both to dwell, secretly living within him and going about with him, as the Lord promised (*cf.* John 4:21–23). But who could love the Son more than His Mother, who did not just bear Him as her only child, but gave birth alone to Him without a husband, such that her parental love was twice as strong, since it was not shared with a spouse? Or who could be more loved by the only-begotten Son than His Mother, especially as He came forth ineffably from her alone in the last times, as He had come forth from the Father alone before time began? How could He who came down to fulfil the law (*cf.* Matt. 5:17) fail to increase many times over, in addition to the loving disposition expected of a son, the honour due to His Mother under that law?

17. Just as it was only through her that the Son came to us, was seen on earth, and lived among men, after previously being invisible to all, so from now on for endless eternity all progress towards the manifestation of divine light, every revelation of divine mysteries, and all forms of spiritual gifts are beyond everyone's grasp without her. She was the first to receive the all-pervading fullness of Him who fills all things (Eph. 1:23; *cf.* 4:10), and she brought Him within reach of all, distributing to each as he is able to receive, in proportion to the measure of his purity, such that she is both the treasure-house and Mistress of God's riches.

18. It is an eternal custom in heaven that those who are lesser should participate through those who are greater in what lies beyond existence,[588] and the Virgin Mother is incomparably greater than all. So as many as will share in God will do so through her, all those who know God will know her as the one who holds Him whom nothing can contain, and all who sing God's praises will hymn her after God. She is the cause of what preceded her, the protectress of what comes after

her, and she procures eternity. She is the prophets' theme, the apostles' starting point, the martyrs' mainstay, and the teachers' foundation. Of all those on earth she is the glory, of those in heaven the delight, the adornment of all creation. Source, fount and root of ineffable good things, she is the crown and perfection of all the saints.

19. O holy and now heavenly Virgin, how can I fully describe you? How can I glorify the treasure-house of glory? Just the remembrance of you brings hallowing. Simply turning towards you makes our mind more lucid, and takes it straight up to divine heights. Through you the eye of our understanding is sharpened; through you our spirit is enlightened by the coming of the divine Spirit. You have become the treasurer of graces and their store, not so you might keep them for yourself, but that you might fill the universe with grace. For the trustee of inexhaustible treasures sees to their distribution. Why would never-dwindling wealth be locked away?

20. Therefore, O Lady, generously share your mercy and your graces with all your people, your inheritance. Rescue us from the terrors that encompass us. See how many dangers of all kinds afflict us, from our own people and from strangers, from within and without. Through your power turn everything for the best. Bring mutual calm between fellow-citizens at home, and drive away those who attack like wild beasts from outside. Bestow your aid and healing on us to counteract our passions, and give our souls and bodies abundant grace sufficient for every need. And if we are unable to contain it, increase our capacity and give us more, that saved and strengthened by your grace we may glorify the pre-eternal Word, who took flesh from you for our sake, together with His Father without beginning and the life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto unending ages. Amen.

HOMILY THIRTY-EIGHT

ON THE FIRST MATINS GOSPEL[589]

THE COMMISSIONING OF THE DISCIPLES INCLUDING THE TEACHING THAT BAPTISM IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO SAVE SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT ALSO STRIVE TO KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

HE WHO WAS BEFORE ANYTHING EXISTED, and of His goodness made everything out of nothing, is in all things,[590] even though He is above all. He was in the world before He came in the flesh, but the world did not recognize Him, as they did not want to (*cf.* John 1:10). But those who were willing did know Him. All who acknowledged Him were accepted, and those who did not were abandoned, as Paul, who not only wanted to know God, but was wanted by Him, and strove to apprehend that for which also he was apprehended (Phil. 3:12), says, writing of the pagan Greeks: "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Rom. 1:28). Those who neither knew God nor wanted to were just like those Greeks. But who are the people who acknowledged God before His incarnation? They were many, but perhaps the most notable and best among them were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who were rightly accepted by God.

2. Not just these men, but all their descendants, were, and were duly called, God's people, and later – what an extraordinarily great gift! – became God's race. For when it was necessary for Him to be manifested to the world in the flesh, He not only took His flesh from them, but came to them first of all. As the Lord Himself says in the Gospels, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house

of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). He saw that they had fallen away from their forebears' piety and virtue, and rejected the knowledge of Him, but on account of the godly lives of their fathers He could not bear to disregard them. So He bowed the heavens and came down (Ps. 18:9), was made in the likeness of men (*cf.* Phil. 2:7), and lived among them, speaking and doing the things of God. Nor did He simply speak and act in this way, He also lavished divine benefits upon them, cleansing their lepers, restoring sight to those of them who were blind, strengthening the paralysed, making straight those who were bowed down, driving demons out of the possessed, healing absolutely every disease, infirmity and madness, and bringing the dead back to life by His command alone.

3. He came as a benefactor to His own place, and His own people not only rejected Him, but, to state the final outcome, they delivered Him up to death, even death on the Cross, as though – what madness! – God who had appeared to them in the flesh for their sake were an enemy of God. They themselves were justly abandoned and cast away by Him who told them, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38). And this rejection became the world's reconciliation (*cf.* Rom. 11:15), and through their disobedience we found mercy (*cf.* Rom. 11:30), or rather – "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom. 11:33) – to quote the apostle again: "God hath consigned them all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all" (Rom. 11:32).

4. We have just heard from the evangelist Matthew's Gospel that "The eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted" (Matt. 28:16–17). When Jesus approached them and spoke to them, however, they too became certain. "And Jesus", it says, "came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:18–19). That is why I just quoted that epistle, that the rejection of the Jews became the world's reconciliation, and that we found mercy through their disobedience.[591] For the Lord who earlier said to His disciples, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5–6), now says, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations". Before, when we were disobedient and were unwilling to acknowledge God, who was in the

world and whom the good order of all created things proclaimed, it was just that God should converse, directly and through His prophets, with those who recognized Him and were eager to obey. But now that they too have become disobedient, it is in no way inconsistent with God's righteous judgment that we should be forgiven and made His disciples through the holy apostles. Perhaps this is the meaning of "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18), because previously God's righteous judgment did not permit us, the disobedient, to find mercy and receive a heavenly calling on equal terms with the obedient.

5. Now that all of us, both Jews and Gentiles, have been shut up in disobedience, some earlier, some later, God, with the authority bestowed by His own righteous judgment, has had mercy on whoever He wished. It was His will to show mercy to us Gentiles, or rather, to all men, for He is the God of all. He wanted mercy to begin now with us, not with those who at present are disobedient. But He has not utterly rejected even them, since through us He has opened a door to salvation for them, should they so wish, and He readily accepts any of them who approach our Church. They have not stumbled that they should fall, but that through their fall salvation should come to us, who used to be disobedient, to provoke them to jealousy (Rom. 11:11), and draw them to the same salvation, unless they close their eyes on purpose and stop their ears, lest through seeing, hearing and believing they should be saved. It is as if someone tipped a vessel containing a source of oil in one direction, but as the oil was free to flow profusely, it not only overflowed and flooded the side it was tipped towards, but the other side as well. The bottomless store of God's compassion in the body of Christ was inclined towards the Gentiles, as the Jews had pushed it away, but it has embraced not only Gentile believers but those from among the Jews as well.

6. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). This can also be applied to Christ's humanity. That authority which He had eternally as God, together with His power, glory, heavenly exaltation and honour, He now receives as man. "All power in heaven and earth", He says, "is bestowed on Me, who am risen from the dead. Death no longer reigns over flesh, for in Me its mortality is swallowed up by life. Death is no longer a final, complete end, for in Me immortal life has taken its place, and through Me all the dead will pass over to eternal life. No longer will death detain the bodies of those who

have died on earth, for I will enthrone My earth-born body in heaven, and ruling over the heavens in it, I shall come again, and judge the whole world as King of all. Those who deserve the earth I shall leave there, but I shall take up to heaven those who are justified, together with their bodies, and bestow the kingdom of heaven on them." "Go ye therefore", He says, "and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them" and "teaching them" (Matt. 28:19, 20). This too comes from the authority He received, for He did not just tell them to teach, but to make disciples of all nations. The command to teach was only for the apostles to fulfil, but the command to make great numbers of disciples gathered from every nation and race, and to baptize them, was no longer only for the teachers but for their hearers, or rather, it would be accomplished by the divine grace and power of the one commanding. The divine Paul indicates this by saying, "Grace hath been given unto me for obedience among all nations" (*cf.* Rom. 1:5).

7. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). Do you observe how the three adored persons are openly proclaimed as sharing the same nature and being of equal honour?[592] For the three have one name, there is one sanctification derived from Them, and one faith in Them. The gospel refers many times to this subject, but more obscurely. When the Lord was baptized, the three persons were distinctly shown, but their common nature and equal honour less clearly so (Matt. 3:13–17). Now, however, the Lord commands this to be preached to all and put into the hearts of the faithful from the very beginning, because without this doctrine and the corresponding belief, it is impossible to lay any foundation for godliness. The Lord does not just say "baptizing" but also, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Consequently, baptism alone is not sufficient to make a person a disciple of the gospel; keeping God's commandments, all of them, is also necessary. For He says, "Teaching them to observe", not just certain things, but "all things whatsoever I have commanded you." So James, the Lord's brother, did well to write, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jas. 2:10). When someone falls into a sin and does not pick himself up from the pit of iniquity through repentance, he becomes, through that sin, a transgressor of the law of grace. "So speak ye", says the Scripture, "and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (Jas. 2:12). Christ's law is a law of liberty, for

through holy baptism He has made us free from the law of sin and death (*cf.* Rom. 8:2).

8. If we do not strive through blameless deeds and words to guard our freedom to the end, or, when it slips away, to summon it back through repentance, we shall be condemned by that liberating law itself for failing to keep the freedom given to us. That is why the divine Paul says of himself, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:26–27). To us he says, stirring us up to the same zeal, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?" (1 Cor. 9:24). He does not say this meaning that in this case too only one person will receive the prize of salvation, but that those who make great efforts will receive it, be they one or many. For this "prize of the high calling" (Phil. 3:14) is inexhaustible and sufficient to be shared with everyone without diminishing.

9. Again Paul urges everyone on by saying, "So run, that ye may obtain" (1 Cor. 9:24), and to show us how to run the race, he says, "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things" (1 Cor. 9:25), never surrendering himself to any forbidden pleasure to the very end. Then, as though those who have been baptized objected, saying that they were acceptable to God through baptism alone without works, Paul makes his point with examples from ancient times, and persuades them that God is not well pleased with anyone unless, in addition to having steadfast faith, he also abstains from evil passions, words and deeds. "Brethren", he says, "I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased" (1 Cor. 10:1–5).

10. All these things were figures of our holy sacraments. The sea foreshadowed the water of baptism; the cloud, the Holy Spirit mysteriously overshadowing from above the people being baptized; the food and drink, Christ's body and blood in which we share more or less[593] every day. Paul called the lifeless, insensate material of that rock spiritual for the same reason. Just as a body empowered and moved by

the soul is called a natural body, so a spiritual body is one in which the Holy Spirit is at work in a way surpassing nature (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:44). Since, through the mysterious energy of the Spirit, that rock carried the fount of water within it wherever it moved, pouring it forth copiously, it is rightly referred to by Paul as a spiritual rock, and adopted as a figure of the body of Christ. This body, too, through the energy of the fullness of the Godhead dwelling within it, possesses the fount of eternal life, and unstintingly offers it to those who draw near in faith.

11. But let us return to our theme. Having said that those people had shared in the symbols of all the sacraments before us, the divine Paul continues, "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (1 Cor. 10:5–6). What he is actually saying is that, once they had gone astray after evil desires, the symbols of the mysteries which had been granted them were of no benefit to them, and did not exempt them from being abandoned by God. Thus they were destroyed outside the promised land, and did not reach it safely. In the same way, if we choose to live sinfully, holy baptism and the divine sacraments that follow it will not save us from eternal condemnation, but we will lose the heavenly inheritance just as they lost the promised land, with our impenitent behaviour and disobedience to God's commandments.[594] That is why Paul goes on to say to us, "Let us not be disobedient, brethren, nor let us harden our heart, as they did in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (*cf.* Heb. 3:8). "With whom", he asks, "was he grieved for forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:17–19). "Neither let us commit fornication", he says elsewhere, "as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ" (1 Cor. 10:8–9, Num. 25:1–9; *cf.* 26:62),[595] by disbelieving His promises to us, and disobeying His commandments and ordinances, "as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer" (1 Cor. 10:9–10; Exod. 16:2; Num. 14:2, 36; 16:11–35).

12. In our own day it is possible to observe these same evil deeds and terrible passions, and also to see that we suffer misfortune because of our sins and experience the same ills as they did. Is anyone unaware that the fire of greed burns in our time, flaring up high and reaching

almost everywhere: public taxation, the market place, agriculture, commerce, and trade? It has already entered the Houses of God, and has dared, during these festive days, to spoil our celebrations through most people's grave and deceitful obsession with profit and frivolity. What difference is there between those who, with their whispering and treachery, stir up civil unrest among us, and the snake who whispered to Eve or those biting serpents in the wilderness? How many of our own people pay no heed to chastity and, not content with lawful marriage, rush into immoral and illicit unions?

13. Because of this and other such behaviour, many of our own people have fallen victim either to the knife or to robbery, and others will too, unless they repent. For even if someone escapes for the time being that wrath which is to come, after death he will not get away, because for those who live without repentance it is inescapable. "For because of these things", it says, "cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience", wrath both present and future (Eph. 5:6). Let each of us, brethren, turn from our wicked ways. Let us not do evil, that evil may not befall us, but let us learn to do good. And let us throw off our vices through confession and appropriate repentance. If we are unable to take full possession of the virtues, then, by being humble towards God, sharing what we have plenty of with the poor, and having a forbearing attitude towards those who fall,[596] let us win forgiveness from on high, and fill up what is lacking in our good works with God's love for mankind, that the Lord may be constantly with us, according to His promise. For after commanding His disciples to baptize and teach, He added, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

14. Those who heard these words with their own ears ministered to God's will in their generation, then departed hence. Therefore the promise is for us as well, who believe in Him from one generation to the next until the end of the world, and demonstrate our faith through deeds. As we have the Lord with us from now, in Him may we obtain the good things both of the present and of the future, to His glory and the glory of His Father without beginning and the co-eternal Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY THIRTY-NINE

DELIVERED AT THE SUPPLICATORY PROCESSION HELD ON ACCOUNT OF THE UNUSUAL, WIDESPREAD AND DEADLY PLAGUE AT THAT TIME[597]

JOHN, CHRIST'S BELOVED THEOLOGIAN, says, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:21–22). As for us, however, our own conscience condemns us. We follow our evil desires, reject God's commandments, and do disgusting things in His sight. We spend all day every day intoxicated with wine and looking out for places to drink, and our nights defiling our souls and bodies. Our lives are passed in injustice and greed, we delight in stealing and extortion, and we envy, hate, revile and slander one another. All forms of virtue and instruction we detest, and we throw ourselves into every kind of sin. So how can we have boldness to ask something of God by means of prayer and psalmody? How can we expect our supplications to be accepted by God when we set aside His will. "Unto the wicked", according to the psalmist, "God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. I will reprove thee, and set thine iniquities before thine eyes. Now consider these things, ye that forget God, lest he seize you and there be none to deliver" (Ps. 50:16–22),[598] just as now we are being seized and there is no one to deliver, no one to help.

2. Not every one of us has all the types of sins just enumerated. But each of us has gone astray on account of one or more of them, and we have together become unprofitable (*cf.* Rom. 3:12). For any one of these sins is sufficient to repel God's mercy, and draws down upon us His wrath. What made the Israelites unworthy of the tablets wrought by God? Was it not drunkenness? When Moses went up the mountain he fasted for forty days and spoke to God on behalf of his race. Then he received tablets not made with hands, written by the finger of God (Exod. 31:18), and came down, bringing the gift to the Israelites. But while still far away he realized from the noise and the obscene shouting that they were drunk, and said, "I hear the noise of them that are drunk" (Exod. 32:18 Lxx). Judging them unworthy of the tablets, which had been made and inscribed by God's own hand, he broke them (Exod. 32:19).[599] He armed against the offenders men whose minds had not been unbalanced by drink, and who had not fashioned the god of drunkards, and by means of them he killed many thousands of people (Exod. 32:27–28). In this way he propitiated the God of the sober. Going up the mountain again, he brought down other tablets, which, although written in the same manner, were no longer exactly the same, for they were made of material taken from the earth (Exod. 34:1). Do you see the deadly consequences of drunkenness from ancient times? How worthy it is of condemnation, and how it makes its adherents unworthy of God's gifts and of this present life? Drunkenness is an incarnate demon, a mental aberration, a physical paralysis, a life worse than death, a starting point for turning away from God. Worst of all, it is also estrangement from the life promised by God, since, says the Scripture, "Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (*cf.* 1 Cor. 6:10).

3. But what about fornication? In those days the people of God left Egypt completely unarmed, and a host of armed men pursued them. When, the Israelites fleeing and the Egyptians in pursuit, they reached the sea, it made a distinction between the two groups through God's will and power, and the rod and hand of Moses. For the former it divided in the middle and drew back, providing them with a safe way through. But it flooded back upon their pursuers, casting them up dead on their own shores. It made the unarmed men like soldiers in

full armour, but despoiled of their weapons the corpses washed ashore (Exod. 14:21–30). Then what happened? The Israelites passed invincibly through inhabited and uninhabited places and lands, conquering all who opposed them. But when they fell under the sway of fornication they were so badly defeated that twenty-three thousand died at once in the battle (*cf.* Num. 25:1–9; 26:62).[600] That is why Paul tells us, "Let us not commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand" (1 Cor. 10:8). And if Phinehas had not conciliated God by zealously killing with one stroke both the harlot and the man committing the abomination, thus putting a stop to the deed, the whole race would have experienced God's wrath and been destroyed on account of the sin of fornication (Num. 25:7–11). Surely you are all aware that this passion loathsome to God is active among you? There is no one to prevent it: hardly any fathers hinder their children, nor do brothers and friends restrain one another. Some even assist, though the apostle says, "With such as these do not eat" (*cf.* 1 Cor. 5:11). So we all deserve death and utter destruction.

4. If fornication is worthy of such severe condemnation, how much more is accursed adultery? It brings down and destroys not just one or two individuals at a time, but whole households and entire fortunes, as well as ties of kindred and succession, after first filling souls with every kind of evil and wickedness. Men had their first experience of death because of it, when it made Cain a murderer (Gen. 4:5–8), so how can its just recompense be other than death, or something worse than death? Then again, how greatly stealing provokes God! In ancient times Achan was the only one who had stolen, but the whole army suffered calamity, until, after investigating, they cast the sinner out of their midst by stoning him (Josh. 6:18–19; 7:1–26).

5. All these things "are written for our admonition" (1 Cor. 10:11), that we might not fall into the same sins and subject ourselves to the same, or even worse, punishments. Since we have the honour to be watched over by God more than that race was, we deserve greater punishments if we do not hold ourselves aloof from the evils God forbids. "For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape", says the apostle, "if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both

with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Heb. 2:2–4).

6. This is why Ananias and Sapphira, who committed a theft not of other people's property but of their own, were put to death on account of lying, which always accompanies stealing, by Peter, or rather by God (Acts 5:1–10), to whom David the prophet says, "Thou shalt destroy them that speak lies" (Ps. 5:6). Paul delivered the fornicator in Corinth to Satan (1 Cor. 5:5), and commanded the Corinthians in writing, "With such an one do not eat" (1 Cor. 5:11). Nor did he reaffirm his love for him until the man concerned had abstained from doing evil, and shown his repentance through his deeds (*cf.* 2 Cor. 2:6–8). As for the greedy man who did not give to those in need when his land brought forth plentifully, but extended his barns, the Lord says to him in the Gospels, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:16–20). Then, lest anyone should suppose that this verdict applied to one particular individual, He adds, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). Yet that rich man did not grow wealthy by unjust means. What wrong did he commit if his land yielded him a good harvest? However, because he did not make good use of the abundance he received from God, and was not rich towards him through being generous, he made himself deserving of death, and gained nothing from all his wealth. Some among us, on the other hand, have in their homes not only things acquired by rightful means, but goods seized from the poor. They love covetousness, which according to Paul is a second form of idolatry (Col. 3:5), and are sick with the love of money, the root of all evils (1 Tim. 6:10). Nor does this apply only to our rulers, but also to our tradesmen. What harm our tavern-keepers and other traders contrive against their customers by not using their measures and scales fairly, whenever there is an opportunity to cheat!

7. It is on account of behaviour such as this that we are being punished and shall be again. We ask longingly to be released from our afflictions, but we add to the sins for which we are being chastised. Do you want to find out how evil covetousness is? It can be discerned from the plague from which we are suffering now. As you can observe, when the blood, one of the elements of the body, becomes excessive, it brings death to the victims.[601] Just as this excess within the body destroys the body, so greed in the soul destroys the soul and kills it, banishing from it that holier life, which is the grace of God. Such

a death of the soul is always a precursor of the bodily death, which results from being abandoned by God. Death came into the world originally as the result of sin and breaking the divine commandment, although man did not die immediately after transgressing, for God granted him time to repent.

8. God could have brought the whole human race out of non-being at the same time. In the case of angels, archangels, principalities, powers, authorities, dominions, cherubim, seraphim, and the highest thrones,[602] He simply thought of them, and His thought immediately became fact, and they all appeared at once. So He could have made all mankind instantaneously, and He could also have obliterated them from the earth at one particular moment, as He did in the Flood, when He preserved only Noah and his children to produce a second generation (Gen. 6:5ff). But out of love for mankind He did not wish to do this. He providentially arranged matters such that each of us would see in someone else, or rather in many others, blood relatives or not, the death that would inescapably overtake us, so that we might be led by this sight towards repentance and meditation on what comes after death. Since He sees us now living completely impenitently and without the least concern for things to come, He is justly bringing death to almost everyone at once, finding it unbearable that we should live for evil and to prolong sin. This is the final plague on sinners, as we are taught from the plagues in Egypt (*cf.* Exod. 12:29–30).

9. It is possible to understand from the nature of this just punishment how much we have sinned against God. When men punish one another, the offender can suffer a heavy penalty for no lawful reason and on account of a small transgression, due to lack of discernment and harshness on the part of the person meting out the punishment. But God's sublime love for mankind could not be provoked to such great anger or to inflict mortal blows, unless we were sinning gravely, and remaining unrepentant while doing so.

10. Let us recognize the huge number of our sins and their seriousness from this fact, and let each of us repent of our carnal ways of thinking and turn to the Lord. Let us repent from our hearts, and shun evil habits and opinions that favour sin, in order to halt God's wrath and transform it into mercy. Let us heal our wickedness, that we may not be destroyed by it. Let us imitate, not those who were wiped out in the flood, but the people of Nineveh who were saved through repentance. Although in those days they did not have many

examples to enable them to understand God's love for mankind, they cried mightily to Him, and every one turned from his wicked way and from the violence that was in his hands, saying, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" (Jonah 3:8–9). We know from this and many other instances that "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah 3:10). But in Nineveh the one who preached and gave the warning was Jonah, who did not even draw them towards repentance or promise them compassion. It was Jonah who went down from Judaea to Joppa, then from there was delivered up to the raging sea for three days, where he was swallowed by a whale, and then preached to Nineveh (Jonah 1:2–3:4).

11. But here we have someone far greater than Jonah (Matt. 12:41). The pre-eternal Word of God Himself, whom Jonah prefigured, came down from heaven to earth, as Jonah descended to Joppa, and was handed over to temptations and sufferings, as Jonah was surrendered to the sea. Through death He descended into the lowest parts of the earth (*cf.* Eph. 4:9), swallowed up by hell as Jonah was by the whale, and then after three days He rose from thence, He promised a heavenly kingdom to those who repent, and clearly preached the works of repentance. These we reject, and are justly delivered up to a wretched death.

12. Death is a grievous thing, both when it happens and when it is awaited, but not turning from our sins is far worse, because it increases our punishment here in this life, and afterwards dispatches us to never-ending punishments, which God forbid that any of us should experience. The terrors of the present seem unbearable, even though they pass and only affect the body, but those others punish both body and soul, without any expectation of deliverance. But let us, brethren, repent and turn back, demonstrating our penitence in word and deed. Let us fall down before God with a contrite heart, saying to Him, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure" (Ps. 38:1), but do unto us according to Thy mercy and not as we deserve. "As Thy greatness is, so is Thy mercy" (*cf.* Ecclus. 2:18).[603] For the Lord is near to those who call upon Him if they cry out, not only with their lips, but with their understanding, directing their deeds and their preoccupations towards Him.

13. "Turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you," says the Lord (Zech. 1:3), and "I will remember your sins no more" (*cf.* Jer. 31:34, Heb. 8:12; 10:17). Provided, of course, we either flee away from them never to return, or else we propitiate God through confession and works of repentance equivalent to our iniquities, reconciling Him to ourselves through active humility. Then, if God's love for us will consent to make up for what we lack, we shall be delivered now from this manifestation of divine anger, from widespread premature death and the universal destruction it causes, and in the age to come we shall obtain everlasting life, to the glory of Christ, the only giver of life, to whom belong glory, power, honour and worship, together with His Father who is without beginning and the life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FORTY

ON CHRIST'S HIGHLY REVERED PROPHET, FORERUNNER AND BAPTIST JOHN[604]

IF THE DEATH OF THE SAINTS is precious (Ps. 116:15) and the just are remembered with praise (Prov. 10:7 LXX), it is even more fitting for us to commemorate John, the highest summit of holy and righteous men, by extolling him. He leapt in the womb in anticipation of the Word of God who took flesh for our sake (Luke 1:41); he was His Forerunner and went before Him as His herald, and the Lord in turn proclaimed and bore witness that John was superior to all the prophets, saints and just men down through the ages (*cf.* Luke 7:28). Everything about him surpasses human speech, and the only-begotten Son of God witnessed to him and honoured him, and he has no need of any tribute from us. But this does not mean that we should keep silent and fail to honour with our words, as best we can, the one whom the Scriptures refer to as "the voice" of the sublime Word (Matt. 3:3, *cf.* Isa. 40:3 LXX). On the contrary, the fact that he was proclaimed to be so great and witnessed to by Christ, the Lord of all, should move every tongue to sing his praises as much as it can. Not that we can add to his glory in any way – how could we? – but in order to pay our debt individually and together by recounting the wonders surrounding him and celebrating them in song.

2. The whole life of the greatest man born of woman was a supreme miracle. John was a prophet and much more than a prophet (Luke 7:26), even before he was born; and not only did his entire life transcend all wonders, but so did everything concerning him, both long before his lifetime and afterwards. The divine predictions of seers inspired by God

described him as an angel rather than a man (Matt. 11:10, *cf.* Exod. 23:20, Mal. 3:1), as a lampstand for the light (John 5:35, *cf.* Ps. 132:17), a divinely radiant star bringing in the morning (*cf.* John 1:8; 5:35),[605] for he went before the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2), and was "the voice" of God's Word (Matt. 3:3, *cf.* Isa. 40:3 Lxx). What could be closer or more akin to God the Word than God's voice?

3. When the time for his conception drew near it was not a man but an angel who flew down from heaven and put an end to Zacharias and Elizabeth's barrenness, promising that the couple who had been childless from their youth would bear a child in extreme old age. The birth of this son would, he foretold, cause much joy, as it would be for the salvation of all (Luke 1:13–14). "For he", said the angel,[606] "shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias" (Luke 1:15–17). For he shall be a virgin as Elijah was, and dwell in the desert more than he did; and he shall censure kings and queens who transgress. What puts him above Elijah, however, is that he shall be the Forerunner of God, for the Scripture says, "He shall go before him".

4. Because Zacharias considered these things beyond belief, his tongue was tied. Since he did not want to announce voluntarily the child's mysterious conception, he proclaimed it against his will by being silent until he saw "the voice" of the Word coming into the light (Luke 1:18–22, 76–79). Having been conceived with so many great promises, he was anointed as a prophet before being born and – marvellous to relate! – passed on this anointing to his mother (Luke 1:41–45). Like Isaiah, he was clothed in the "garment of salvation" and the "robe of righteousness" (Isa. 61:10); like Elijah he anointed someone else to be a prophet in his place (*cf.* 1 Kgs. 19:16), and while still unborn he equalled and surpassed both prophets in their perfection, because he displayed these attributes in the presence of the Lord. Once an unborn babe's members have been formed, it can move, but does not yet have a voice, as it is not yet living in the air. When the Virgin, who was at that time carrying God within her, appeared, even though John was in the womb he did not fail to perceive God's presence and His dispensation, but extolled it, declaring the divinity through his mother's tongue (Luke 1:42). He leapt and rejoiced within her as – what a miracle! – he received in the Holy Spirit the fullness of the age to come in his mother's womb.

5. Proclaiming beforehand the mystery of eternal life, the great Paul says, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44). That is to say, the body will be indwelt and motivated by the supernatural power of the divine Spirit in the age to come.[607] In the same way, John was sown and shaped in his mother's womb as a natural body, but by the mysterious anointing of the Holy Spirit while he was within her, he was shown to be a spiritual body, who leapt and rejoiced in the Spirit and made his mother a prophetess. Through her tongue he blessed God with a loud voice and declared the Virgin who was with child to be the Mother of the Lord, and He addressed her unborn Babe as the fruit of her womb, proving that she was at the same time both pregnant and a virgin (Luke 1:41–45).

6. John did not merely, in the words of the Scripture, choose the good before knowing evil (*cf.* Isa. 7:16 LXX), but while still unborn, before knowing the world, he surpassed it. Then once he was born he delighted and amazed everyone by reason of the miraculous events surrounding him, because, it says, "The hand of the Lord was with him" (Luke 1:66), working wonders again as it had in earlier time. His father's mouth, which had been closed because he had not believed in the child's strange conception, was opened and filled with the Holy Spirit, and he prophesied, among other things, about this his son, saying, "And thou, child shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people" (Luke 1:76–77). Once this divine child, this living instrument of grace from his mother's womb, had been conceived, he was moved by grace to rejoice in the Holy Spirit. In the same way, after being born, he grew and waxed strong in the Spirit (Luke 1:80). As the world was unworthy of him, he dwelt continuously in desert places from his earliest years, leading a frugal life without cares or worldly concerns, a stranger to sadness, free from coarse passions and above base, material pleasure, which merely beguiles the body and its senses. He lived for God alone, beholding only God and making God his delight. It was as if he lived somewhere exalted above the earth. "And he was in the deserts", it says, "till the day of his shewing unto Israel" (Luke 1:80).

7. On what day was he shown to Israel? When the time came for the Lord to be baptized, concerning which time the Scripture says, "there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become

unprofitable" (Rom. 3:11, *cf.* Ps. 14:3 and 53: *cf.* 53:2–3 LXX). Just as in those days the Lord came down from heaven for our sake, when we were all ungodly (*cf.* Rom. 5:6–8), because of His ineffable love, so John left the desert for our sake to minister to the Lord's loving purpose. As men's wickedness was then at its peak, and the loving condescension of God was beyond compare, a servant was also needed, whose virtue was nothing less than excellent, so that he could draw observers, as John did, having attracted their admiration as someone unusual with a superhuman way of life. And the message he preached was worthy of the manner in which he lived, for he proclaimed the kingdom of heaven, threatened unquenchable fire, and taught that Christ was the heavenly King, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable" (Luke 3:17).

8. He did not just make the Lord known to all with his words, but also through his deeds. He baptized Him, pointed Him out with his finger, recommended Him to his own disciples, and bore witness in all ways that this man was the Son of the Father, the Lamb of God (*cf.* John 1:29, 34–36), the bridegroom of the souls that draw near to Him (John 3:29), He who bears the sin of the world (John 1:29), takes away defilement, and brings instead His gift of sanctification. Once John had prepared the Lord's way, according to Zacharias's prophecy, had fulfilled everything which he had been sent to do, had gone before Him, and had baptized Him in the Jordan, he conceded to Christ the rôle of addressing the assembled crowds and teaching them, and withdrew from the multitude, handing them over to the Lord. As Herod, the son of that Herod who slaughtered the infants (Matt. 2:16), had not succeeded to all his father's power, being merely a tetrarch, but had exceeded him in evil, living in immorality and presenting the Jews with an example of wickedness, John was unable to keep silent. (How could he, as he was "the voice" of the Truth? Matt. 3:3, *cf.* Isa. 40:3 LXX.) He accused him on account of his other evil deeds, but especially concerning Herodias, his brother's wife, whom he had seized and illegally wed. "It is not lawful", said John to Herod, "for thee to have thy brother Philip's wife" (Mark 6:18). Finding reproach, or rather, the reproaches, unbearable, he added this to his other evil acts, that he shut up John in prison (Luke 3:20).

9. Philip was also Herod's son, and was tetrarch of another region. After the cruel murder of the infants had deranged their father, Herod

(Matt. 2:16), he fell victim to misfortunes and incurable, unbearable illnesses, and out of extreme folly and great pain he killed himself. It was then that the angel said to Joseph in Egypt, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life" (Matt. 2:20). When this Herod's life came to an evil end, Caesar,[608] who held universal authority at that time, divided Herod's realm into four portions. He put other men in charge of two of them, but made Herod's sons, Philip and Herod, tetrarchs of the remaining parts. That is why the evangelist Luke says that Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and the region of Trachonitis when John appeared by the Jordan preaching the baptism of repentance (Luke 3:1–3).

10. It was this young Herod who, as Matthew and Mark relate, laid hold of John, and bound him, and put him in prison, because he had been accused by John on account of Herodias, his brother's wife, whom he had taken as his own (Matt. 14:3, Mark 6:17). Luke says that Herod, being reproved not just on account of Herodias, but "for all the evils which he had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison" (Luke 3:19–20). Why do the other evangelists refer only to the accusation concerning Herodias? John was shut up in prison for many other reasons as well, especially because of all those actions of the evilly-inclined king, for which he had been rebuked by John, and so could not bear him to speak freely. However, the sole cause of John's head being cut off was the adulteress, who by her own efforts and wiles accomplished the deed and saw it through to its conclusion. She inwardly cherished malice against John, who was reproving and opposing Herod for his unlawful act, and she wanted to kill him (Mark 6:19), for there was no other way to silence what she took to be an accusation against herself. The abomination in which she was involved did not have just one or two aspects, but was highly complex. It was a matter of adultery, the most shameful of sins, and adultery committed by none other than the brother of the adulteress's husband, the father of her daughter, while the daughter was still alive. Even if the husband had died, his brother could not marry the widow according to the law of Moses (*cf.* Deut. 25:5, Gen. 38:8), but Herod secretly planned their union while his brother was alive and had a daughter.[609] Nor did he do this shameful deed secretly or with any sort of dissimulation, but accomplished the abomination openly and shamelessly.

11. Completely given over to evil in this way, and unable to endure censure, he shut up John in prison. But this imprisonment itself became an even greater reproach to him, as people heard about it and saw it, and the news circulated everywhere. As a result, Herodias deeply resented John, and inwardly wanted to murder him, but could not. "For Herod", it says, "feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy" (Mark 6:20). Although Herod feared John on account of his outstanding virtue, he had no fear of God, from whom men receive virtue. Also, even though he knew him to be a just and holy man, he did not fear John in his own right, but feared him because of the masses, who, as Matthew tells us, "counted him as a prophet" (Matt. 14:5). According to his account, not just Herodias, but also Herod himself wanted to put him to death, but feared the multitude.

12. The meaning of Mark's statement, that Herod heard John gladly is as follows: In the case of medicinal draughts, we are aware of their bitter taste, but we take them, because we understand they do us good. But the opposite applies to spiritual teachings. As they are naturally sweet, even those who do not believe in them delight in them, but they do not accept them, because they realize that they are opposed to their own evil desires. Perhaps earlier on Herod had heard John gladly, since, as it says, "he observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things" (Mark 6:20). But as evil men naturally hate their accusers, since reproof gives rise to hatred, he ignored all this, agreed with the adulteress's murderous purpose, and would himself have put John to death, according to Matthew, but feared the multitude (Matt. 14:5). It was not that he dreaded some sort of resistance on their part, but just that they would condemn him, because they counted John as a prophet. He knew that everyone was aware of John's virtue and grace, and, being reliant on the good opinion of the common people, he feared their criticism. As he was seeking praise from them, in some respects he still feigned obedience and reverence towards John.

13. Herodias, however, who was wise in doing evil, put an end to this fear of Herod's, and persuaded him to murder John without just cause, in accordance with her own opinion, or rather, her deceit. Full of spite and murderous feelings, she was looking for an opportunity to put into effect her fanatical hatred of the Baptist and Prophet, while protecting herself from being blamed by the masses. "And when", it says, "a convenient day was come" (Mark 6:21), convenient,

that is, for the murderous scheme, during the celebration of Herod's birthday, while all the people were assembled, and the men of importance were in their seats, Herodias's daughter came in among them all, despatched by her mother for this purpose (Mark 6:22). The girl danced in the sight of all, and pleased everyone including Herod. Given that she was Herodias' daughter, and had been sent in by her, how could she fail either to dance shamelessly, or to please Herod? Her brazen dancing so captivated the pleasure-loving king that he said to the girl, "Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom" (Mark 6:22–23).

14. The impudent girl went out to her mother, the one who had taught her how to leap and writhe in that unseemly way, and told her of the oath. She asked to be instructed as to what she should request, was immediately informed, and eagerly obeyed (Mark 6:24). She hurried back to the king, and shamelessly stated her demand, saying, "I will that thou give me at once", that is, as quickly as possible, this very moment, "in a charger the head of John the Baptist" (Mark 6:25). This is what the girl asked for without blushing, and the adulteress imagined that by such means she would prevent the king being blamed for murdering the Baptist and Prophet, for she said that he would appear to be committing the murder out of respect for this oath, not out of hatred for the righteous man. "And the king", it says, "was exceedingly sorry: yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her". So he sent and beheaded John in prison, and the head was brought and given to the girl (Mark 6:26–28).

15. How many evils are caused by the mad desire for glory! Herod was unable to murder John because of the multitude, but he did it on account of the people sitting with him. He was exceeding sorry for the sole reason that he thought he had lost the esteem of the masses. The king was indeed hemmed in on every side. If he murdered the just man, he could expect to be blamed for the murder. If he did not, he would seem to have broken his oath. The oath was the result of pride, his fear of breaking it was due to conceit, and the murder committed to keep it was for honour's sake. It was vainglory which assembled that whole drinking party. The Lord is right to say in the Gospels, "How can ye believe in me, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only" (John 5:44). Because the

Jews too looked for glory from men, they refused to believe in Him. They beheaded all their prophets, and destroyed Christ, the fulfilment of the prophets. The actions of a king ruled over by adulteresses and dancing girls were just as bad. He was enchanted and pleased by such evil deeds, and because of them he sold and betrayed his kingdom, and was brought to the point of doing an act such as this.

16. Brethren, our mind too suffers something similar. It was created by God to be king and absolute ruler of the passions, but when charmed by them, it is led into unnatural servitude and alien deeds. All those enslaved by sin and passions, when they are accused by their own conscience, are grieved and displeased. Their first reaction is, so to speak, to shut their conscience, as Herod imprisoned John, because he did not want to hear him. They cannot even bear to hear words of Scripture which reject sin, and encourage every kind of goodness. Finally, once they are completely in the power of the Herodias, who unlawfully shares their life – in other words, of a mind that is prone to sin – they destroy the word of grace dwelling within them, that is, their conscience. Annulling it utterly, they disbelieve and contradict the Scripture inspired by God, becoming entirely unscrupulous and opposed to God's word, as Herod was against John.

17. Those who speak against the truth of godliness also suffer the same fate, and, to an even greater extent, do the same things. Standing accused by the prophetic, apostolic and patristic words which we offer, initially it is as if they shut them up in books, saying, "Let them stay in there, and may nobody use them or pronounce them", for they do not listen to the Lord who tells us, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye shall find eternal life" (*cf.* John 5:39). Subsequently, led into something worse by Herodias, their own impious imagination, they serve them up slaughtered on a plate, destroyed by their own writings, for the malicious joy of those who agree with them, and to their detriment.[610]

18. Herod, therefore, is an example of everything evil and impious, whereas John is the pillar of all virtue and godliness. Herod is the fullness of wickedness, the power of ungodliness, the tool of lawlessness, is absolutely carnal, and lives and thinks according to the flesh. John, by contrast, is the summit of all the God-bearing men down through the ages, the visible resting-place of the gifts of the Spirit, who bears the Name of divine grace,[611] and in whom all piety and virtue dwell. Two images are set before us today, extreme opposites at

odds with each other. The one seems to bring a little enjoyment and honour in the short term to those inclined to live after its example, then delivers them up to unceasing, unbearable disgrace and affliction. The other gives those who look towards it short-lived suffering, then bestows on them glory and divine enjoyment, which are beyond description, true and eternal. If we live after the flesh, imitating the carnal Herod, we shall die, as the apostle says (Rom. 8:13). But if, through the divine Spirit and with zeal like John's, we oppose the body's evil appetites and deeds, we shall live for ever.

19. The outcome of living according to the Spirit "is hidden now in Christ with God", and is not yet obvious to all. But when He appears (*cf.* Col. 3:3–4), "we shall be like Him" (1 John 3:2), "heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), and shall attain to those everlasting and incorruptible good things, "which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man" (*cf.* 1 Cor. 2:9), for they transcend hearing, sight, and understanding. As for those who live according to the flesh, their pleasures are not just fleeting and temporary, but so slight and paltry that they can be compared to the husks eaten by pigs (*cf.* Luke 15:16).

20. Even if these carnal pleasures were everlasting, we would still of necessity prefer spiritual joys to them, since these are in all respects incomparably more excellent. If, on the other hand, fleshly delights were as great and amazing as spiritual ones, the fact that the former are transitory and the latter eternal would again make the latter preferable because they endure. As spiritual pleasures are both everlasting and beyond compare, and the delights of the flesh are pointless and short-lived, let us, brethren, prefer those which are permanent, ineffable and heavenly, rather than those which are swept away and go to ruin. Let us overlook things that are fleeting, even if they treacherously beguile our senses for a moment, and let us lay claim to the lasting and eternally indestructible good things to come. We should flee from being like Herod and strive as much as we can to imitate the Forerunner's grace, especially those of us who live as monks, whose manner of life is set apart, and is more akin to the solitary life of the Prophet and Baptist in the desert. As a prophet, he foresaw that it would be the order of monks who would be able to some extent to emulate him, and his head was cut off as he struggled, not for the sake of godliness, but for virtue,[612] so that we too might be ready to resist sin to the point of death, in the knowledge that he who

puts the passions to flight through virtue will receive a martyr's crown. Just as sin is a lesser evil compared with godlessness, so it follows that putting yourself at risk for virtue's sake is even better than doing so for godliness. For anyone who lays down his life in this lesser cause of virtue could not fail to do the same, had the need arisen, in the greater cause of godliness.[613]

21. That is why the greatest "among them that are born of women" (Matt. 11:11), the preacher of repentance and the Lord's Prophet and Herald, had his head cut off in the struggle for virtue. Nor was he just the Forerunner of Christ, but also of His Church and particularly, brethren, of our monastic way of life.[614] He was born of Elizabeth, a barren woman, and we were born of the Church of the Gentiles of whom it is written, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife" (Isa. 54:1, Gal. 4:27). After John was born, Herod, the murderer of infants, pursued him with murderous intent, fighting against him out of hatred for Christ, but the Forerunner found refuge in the desert, which he loved more than the world, and there he dwelt. In the same way, the Herod of our minds attacks us after our spiritual birth, persecuting Christ now through us.

22. So let us too flee from the world, and take refuge in those schools of virtue dedicated to God, that we may escape from Herod's pitiless soldiers armed with spears and swords, who stir up the passions, by means of which he inflicts spiritual death, separating men from God. This is the death that comes upon us through the windows of our senses. It came about originally by means of these senses, and dragged down the human race, banishing our forebears from eternal life. Eve heard the evil one's malicious counsel: she saw, succumbed, ate, died, enticed the man, and shared the taste and the fall with him. Incapable of withstanding a single trial, they immediately gave heed to a treacherous word, and were overcome by a beautiful sight, although they were not yet subject to the passions but dispassionate,[615] wandering about in a place free from passions. So do you think that we, who have been born and brought up in the world, can avoid being harmed, or suffering wounds and a change for the worse in our inner selves, when we are faced with the passions in their various guises, and with hearing and joining in prolonged and unseemly conversations? That would be absolutely impossible.

23. For these reasons the Fathers imitated the Forerunner of grace, bade farewell to the world, and fled the company of those devoted to it. Some inhabited the desert and attracted to it many of those born later. Others led ascetic lives within sacred enclosures and organized spiritual communities, and we associate ourselves with various ones of these in emulation of the Fathers, and live in these hallowed folds. We should not, however, merely dwell in them, but also live as the Fathers lived. Even these other paradises of God on earth are not without the tree of knowledge of good and evil, or the wicked guide. Instructed by the examples from former times, however, we can pay heed to the sole wise and good Counsellor, and follow in the steps of those who were, and are now, obedient to Him, imitating their conversation, to use the apostle's expression (*cf.* Heb. 13:7), as we have seen the outcome of their lives. There are also wild animals and cattle in the desert and in these hallowed sanctuaries, and we must greatly fear lest any of us should fail to imitate John's way of life, as far as is possible, and be reckoned among the senseless beasts and become like them (*cf.* Ps. 49:12, 20).

24. What else? John always had his head uncovered as a sign of unceasing prayer,[616] and boldness towards God, for when a man prays he should have his head uncovered, according to the apostle (*cf.* 1 Cor. 11:4), that with unveiled face we may reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord (*cf.* 2 Cor. 3:18). Let those who are bound up with the world cover themselves on account of these harmful things that surround them, or rather, are innate within them, and their constant impediments, since they cannot pray unceasingly as we do. We, on the other hand, who have abandoned the world in a good cause, should withdraw our thoughts from it as well, uniting our minds to Christ in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19), and make ourselves a dwelling-place for the saving Name (*cf.* Acts 2:21, 38; 4:12; 10:43), remembering Him for whose sake we left the world. For anyone who has retired from the world and this life's concerns for His sake obviously longs for union with Him, and this is brought about by the constant remembrance of Him, which purifies the mind.[617]

25. Let us cleanse the eye of our understanding by reaching up with our deeds, words and thoughts towards God. There would be nothing to drag us down if we were only to look, as far as we can, at John's way of life. He went around without a roof over his head, so let us be content with a small shelter, and may each one of us gladly

accept the modest room which the superior gives us, remembering him who was homeless all his life long. He was satisfied with "locusts", the name of a type of fruit, and "wild honey" (Matt. 3:4, Mark 1:6), a plant which grows wild in the desert, the roots of which were used as food by the Fathers who dwelt there after him. So he lived on fruit and plant roots, or honey from the mountains, had only one garment, and wore a girdle of skin about his loins, thus showing symbolically that he carried about in his body the death of the passions, and also that he possessed the virtue of poverty, teaching it to us through his actions. How well off we are in everything necessary for nourishment and clothing! We have receptacles and storehouses full of grain and wine, kitchens and bakeries, and absolutely everything we need.

26. Let us thank God who gives us these things, and His Forerunner, for through Him we gather them in effortlessly, as if they flowed towards us from a spring. Let us accept them to His glory, rendering Him thanksgiving through our deeds. If we are content with these provisions, which are common to everyone in the monastery, we are not far removed from John's poverty and self-control.[618] For although he was unrivalled in all respects, yet we are nourished from God's stores, just as he was fed by God. If, on the other hand, we have possessions and stocks of our own, that is something terrible which separates us from the communion of the saints. Anyone who has withdrawn from the world and has property, which he either brought with him or has acquired here, carries the world around with him and never leaves it. Even if he is on the Holy Mountain itself, dwelling in those monasteries, which are an image of the heavenly country, as far as he is concerned, he profanes the place and stops it being superior to the world. Such a person will obviously be condemned for regarding God's sanctuary as somewhere ordinary. But did John, the Lord's Baptist and Herald, leave that peaceful wilderness? He did, but he was sent by the Lord to give His people knowledge of salvation and to rebuke the disobedient, which is why he was beheaded by them on this day. It was not fitting that he should die a natural death, for dying naturally is the sentence of Adam's transgression, which was not binding upon the minister of the commandment, who had obeyed God even from his mother's womb. The saints should lay down their lives for the sake of virtue and godliness, as the Lord commanded, so a violent death for the sake of what is good is more appropriate for them. That is also why the Lord experienced such a death.[619] It was

necessary for John's death to herald the death of Christ, such that he should go before the Lord, in accordance with his father's prophecy concerning him, to give knowledge of salvation to them that sit in the darkness of hell (*cf.* Luke 1:76–77, 79), that they too might run to obtain blessed eternal life in Christ.

27. May we all attain to this by the intercessions of him who obtained it even from his mother's womb, proclaimed it to those on earth and those under the earth, and guided, and continues to guide, all towards it by his words, deeds and prayers to God, in Christ Himself our Lord, to whom alone belongs eternal glory. Amen.

HOMILY FORTY-ONE

On the Gospel Of the Fourteenth Sunday of Matthew,[620] On the Parable that Invites Us To the Son's Wedding

INCLUDING A REPLY TO THOSE WHO ASK WHY GOD CALLED PEOPLE WHO WOULD EITHER NEVER OBEY HIM AT ALL OR WOULD NOT OBEY HIM IN THEIR DEEDS AND WHY HE MADE THOSE WHO ARE TO BE PUNISHED

I SHALL START by quoting to your charity the end of the Lord's parable in today's Gospel reading, "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14). The Lord teaches us this through the whole parable, that we might strive to be not merely among those invited, but among the elect. For anyone who is just one of those called, but not one of the chosen, is not only deprived of the light without evening, but is also led away into outer darkness. After his hands have been bound, because they did not do God's work, and his feet, because they did not run towards God, he is delivered up to weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 22:13).

2. First of all, you might be puzzled why the Lord said that many, but not all, were called. If not everyone was invited, then it is unjust that those who were not should forfeit the promised good things, and experience the threatened torments. Perhaps if they had been called, they might have obeyed. But whereas it is reasonable to suppose that, if they had not been called, it would be unfair for them to be rejected, it is untrue that not everyone was called. When the Lord was carried

up to heaven after His resurrection from the dead, He said to His disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15), and, “Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20). The fact that the disciples put this command into action is adequately proved by the great Paul. “Have they not heard?” he asks, “Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world”, referring to the apostles' preaching (Rom. 10:18). So all were summoned, and those who did not come to the faith, shall justly be punished. Why, therefore, did the Lord say that many were called, but not all? Because at this point He was speaking about those who had come to Christ, which is why He put this statement later, after the parable. If, when someone was invited, he were to obey the summons, and, having been baptized, were to be called by Christ's name, but were not to behave in a way worthy of his calling, nor fulfil the promises made at his baptism to live according to Christ, then, although he was called, he was not chosen.

3. But some people are surprised at this as well, or rather, being earth and clay, and born yesterday, they accuse Him who dwells from all eternity above the heavens. Why, they ask, did God call those whom He knew would not obey Him at all, or at least not in their actions? In short, why did He make men who would be damned, when He foreknew what would happen?[621] Instead of listening to the Lord's words, “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:9), they rebuke and call to account God, who is beyond our mind's grasp.[622] Are we any different from ants? Are our bodies not made of the same stuff as theirs? Do we not eat the same food, live in the same places, and have the use of more or less the same faculties? In fact, some of the ants' abilities are better than our own: they see more clearly what will be beneficial to them in the future, they are much better at knowing what they will need, and are more diligent about the annual harvest. Even so, are we not more excellent than they by virtue of our rational souls?[623] Then again, what is that superiority compared with God's superiority over us?

4. If all the ants in the world put together could never comprehend our most insignificant deed or thought, as we are superior to them in every respect, how are we able to understand the works and mind of God, who is infinitely superior to us,[624] or to make accurate

conjectures about the sequence of events, without faith? As the great luminary in the heavens could not give us daylight, if its brilliance did not surpass our vision, so God, who created our human nature, could not provide us with salvation, if He were comprehensible to us, and His wisdom and goodness did not go beyond our understanding.

5. As for those who accuse God of calling people who were not going to act in obedience to Him, no doubt they would also have held Him responsible for the destruction of such people, had He not called them. He called them so that no one could say that He was the cause of their being punished. Why was it, then, that He created men who were to be damned? He did not make them to be punished, but to be saved, as is clear from the fact that He called them. If He had wanted to damn anyone at all, He would not have called everyone to salvation. If God led me and called me to salvation through His goodness, but I turned out evil, ought my wickedness, before it even existed, to have overcome His eternal goodness and have thwarted it? That would be totally unreasonable. People who assert otherwise and make accusations against the Creator are actually saying that it was wrong to make human beings rational. For reason would be pointless without free choice[625] and the power of self-governance.[626] How can someone have the freedom to choose[627] and the power to act freely,[628] unless he were able to be evil, should he so wish? If he could not be wicked, nor could he, presumably, be good.

6. Anyone who states that God should not have made those people who will be punished, is also saying that He should not have made those who will be saved, or any rational and free beings[629] at all. As everything else was made for the sake of mankind,[630] such a person is contending that God should not have created anything. Do you see the absurdity of this? God made the human race rational and free,[631] and because of men's tendency to please themselves and the different uses to which they put their freedom, some were to become bad, and others good. What should God, who is truly good, have done? Ought He not to have brought good men into being on account of those who would turn out evil? That would be the greatest injustice imaginable. For even if there were only going to be one good person, it would not have been just to stop creating, since one man who does God's will is superior to innumerable sinners. Should we perhaps tell those who pick out gold from the dirt, that they should not start by collecting the useless earth along with the gold dust? We would hear in reply,

that if they did not do so, they could not select out the gold. In the same way, there would be no elect if the others were not called as well, and how could they be called if they had not been made?

7. Let us bring our arguments closer to the point, and ask those who lay charges against the one who wishes all to be saved, about people who do not want their own salvation. As we are all mortal, we need nourishment. But as our body's natural processes select and absorb part of our food for our sustenance and, having made what remains ill-smelling, get rid of it as useless by the appropriate means, does this mean that you would completely reject food on account of that part of it which will end up as dung? Or will you accept food in its entirety on account of that portion of it which is chosen, assimilated and incorporated, through our digestive system, for our physical sustenance? There is obviously no need for a reply. We provide the answer by our actions, as we feed ourselves every day, consuming food that is unsuitable for our physical nourishment for the sake of that which is. What makes us do this? Our inborn desire to live. Similarly, because of His innate kindness and love of goodness, God did not stop bringing good people into being on account of those who would become bad by their own fault. Rather, He created those who would be evil for the sake of the good.

8. Have you not seen how doctors do not allow patients to go without food when, because of the weakness of their stomach, they cannot keep down nourishment but vomit it up? Why do they urge them to eat? Because their constitution receives something, however little, from the food, even though most of what they eat is rendered useless by the vomiting. That is why the art of medicine is rightly called philanthropic. So God's love for what is good and His philanthropy are demonstrated above all by this: that although those who seek their own salvation are few, in comparison with the great number of those who will not be saved, yet He created the whole human race, and although not many are going to be chosen, in His exceedingly great love for mankind He called everyone.

9. "The kingdom of heaven", it says, "is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come" (Matt. 22:2–3). The wedding here means the union of the Son of God with man's nature, and hence with our Church. Similarly, when Paul says that marriage is a great mystery, he adds, "But I speak concerning

Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). Again, he tells us elsewhere, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). Why does the original not say that the King of heaven made a marriage for his son, but use the word "nuptials", in the plural?[632] Because whenever Christ, the bridegroom of pure souls, is mystically united with each soul, He gives the Father occasion to rejoice over this as at a wedding. It is Christ Himself who says, "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:7). For joy, according to the apostle, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22), who through conversion brings back to Christ those living in repentance, and reunites them with Him. And this joy embraces both those in heaven and godly men on earth. That is why there is joy in heaven over one repentant sinner.

10. While the inexpressible union of the Son of God who gives us repentance and humanity was already being accomplished, and God the Father was mysteriously celebrating His joy over this in heaven, servants were sent out. They were John, the Lord's Forerunner, Zacharias, whom the Jews killed between the altar and the Temple (2 Chr. 24:20–22, Luke 11:51), Simeon, who held God in his arms (Luke 2:28–35), and, in a word, all who announced, before the saving passion and the resurrection, that the Lord's coming to earth in the flesh had already been fulfilled. They were dispatched to summon the guests, that is to say, the Jews (for it is they who were bidden, having been called previously through the prophets). However, they were unwilling to come, in other words, to believe and share in the indescribable communion and grace, even though they had been invited many times beforehand as well as now. "Again", it says – what extraordinary patience! – "he sent forth other servants, saying, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage" (Matt. 22:4). Some of those that heard made light of it and went off to their farms and their merchandise (Matt. 22:5). Are those who use grape-harvests, vineyards, and problems with their business as an excuse for missing church services,[633] and who are reluctant to listen to the holy psalmody and teaching, any different from them? Others, it says, lay hold on the servants, insulted them and killed them (Matt. 22:6). Not far removed from the latter are those who, in the present day, disobey Church leaders and sometimes speak against them with hostility. But

let us freely squeeze the saving juice out of this parable for the sake of such people too.

11. "Behold", says the king, "I have prepared my finest banquet: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready" (Matt. 22:4). It is a fact that the finest of God's works was accomplished when the Lord became man. Every good and noble thing that God had done for our sake before the Incarnation, as part of His saving plan, was directed towards this end. The most excellent thing of all, or rather, the only truly excellent event beyond compare, was the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ and, even more so, its outcome: the saving passion and the resurrection. The invitation in the Parable apparently took place after the Lord's resurrection, for then it was that all the prerequisites for our salvation were ready: the complete divine plan for the Son of God in the flesh, His divine teaching while incarnate, the consequences of His activity as God and man, the sharing of His divine and human body, the great and holy Sacrifice for our salvation, the resurrection from the dead on the third day, the beginning of eternal life with its godly joy. "My oxen", he says, "and my fatlings are killed." For the old order was united with the new at that time, the new indicated by the sacrifice of calves fattened on grain – for in church now it is bread that is sacrificed for us – and the old by the oxen, transformed into something more divine through the new Sacrifice.

12. Other servants, the Lord's apostles, were dispatched to preach this message to the Jews as well, while the Master was still forbearing towards them. But when they heard, some did not even attend, as they were wholly taken up with their fields and merchandise, the earth and worldly affairs, whereas others seized the preachers, reviled some and stoned others. As far as their intentions were concerned, they insulted and killed them all. "So the king was angry", it says, "and he sent and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city" (Matt. 22:7). Since He was still patient even after they had brought about the passion, He sent servants summoning them to repent, proclaiming an amnesty and announcing the bestowal of great and good gifts. They gave guarantees and earnests to this effect, as well as firm assurances. Their hearers, however, not only failed to repent or pay heed, but responded with abuse and repaid the bringers of good tidings with murder. Then the king rightly sent men to destroy them and burn down their city. Everyone knows that these things befell

Jerusalem,[634] which the Lord justifiably called a city of murderers (*cf.* Matt. 23:37, Luke 13:34, Isa. 1:21, Jer. 4:31–32).

13. The people who had been invited, not only now but on many previous occasions, proved themselves unworthy of this calling, and deserving of divine wrath and destruction. So at the Lord's command the same servants, the Lord's apostles, went out into the streets and gathered together, it says, "as many as they found, both bad and good" (Matt. 22:10), and the house was filled with guests. These are those called from among the Gentiles. In those days there was one City of God, Jerusalem, and one Household of God, Israel. Those outside were Gentiles, who were like people flung out into many different streets, for they had numerous and varied beliefs. Those whom the servants found in the highways, and gathered in, are referred to as evil and good on account of the difference in their resolve, as a result of which some were chosen, and their behaviour and way of life were seen to accord with their faith, whereas others were expelled from among the elect, having lived shameful and wicked lives inconsistent with faith.

14. This is illustrated by what follows. "The king", it says, "came in to see the guests", namely, those of the people invited who had come. His coming in to look at the guests and examine them signifies His appearing at the time of the future Judgment. "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment" (Matt. 22:11). Virtue is the spiritual wedding garment, and anyone who has not put it on from now, will not only be found unworthy of that divine bridechamber, but will also experience indescribable bonds and scourging. As every soul has its companion, the body, as its covering, anyone who fails to preserve his body and cleanse it in this life by means of self-control, purity and chastity,[635] will possess it then as a useless garment, unworthy of that incorruptible bridechamber, and the cause of his being thrown out. Once the king, it says, had accused and put to shame the man who was not dressed in a manner worthy of his calling, he told his servants, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away." In other words, "Surround him with inescapable terrors, and separate him from the dwelling and company of those who rejoice," and "Cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 22:13). He is tightly shackled by the chains of his sins here and now, so it is just

that he be bound hand and foot and thrown into outer darkness, going even further away from God, because he did not do works of light in this life. In that place, it tells us, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for that darkness is not merely darkness, but also unquenchable fire, which is filled, moreover, with unsleeping worms (*cf.* Mark 9:48, Isa. 66:24).

15. So there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth on account of the unbearable sufferings inflicted, which attack both soul and body, the never-ending lamentation and the unceasing regret, which is useless there. After saying these words, the Lord adds, "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14), to show us that it is not just one particular man who will experience these horrors, but absolutely everyone who is clothed by his deeds in the same depravity. By means of this one individual the Lord sets before us what those evil people are like who, having been called, drawn near and been baptized, have not undergone any change for the better, nor laid aside through repentance the filth that comes from wicked pleasures and passions.

16. As for us, brethren, let us take off the garment torn to shreds by drunkenness and filling our stomach, and stained by the flesh and its excesses, and let us clothe ourselves, as Isaiah says, "with the garment of salvation and the robe of joy" (Isa. 61:10 Lxx), through self-control and chastity. Let us lay aside the old man, "which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22), and put on the new man, which after God is created in holiness and righteousness (*cf.* Eph. 4:24). Let us take off our life's complex covering of rapacity and greed, since it is ugly in God's sight and condemned, and let us put on, as the elect of God, compassion, humility, modesty and meekness (*cf.* Col. 3:12). And let us strive in all ways, according to the apostle's exhortation, to make our calling and election sure (*cf.* 2 Pet. 1:10). By so doing, we shall not fail to attain to the promise of good things to come, and the company of those who rejoice eternally.

17. May we all attain to this, by the grace and love for mankind of Christ, our spirits' eternal heavenly bridegroom, with whom glory is due to the Father and the Holy Spirit, unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FORTY-TWO

ON THE SAVING NATIVITY OF OUR MOST PURE LADY MOTHER OF GOD AND EVER-VIRGIN MARY[636]

THE TIME IS ALWAYS RIGHT to make a beginning of a way of life that will lead to salvation. To prove this, the great Paul says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us do the works of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day" (*cf.* Rom. 13:12–13). He does not mean that one particular hour or day is the acceptable time, but the whole period after the manifestation of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. When the visible sun has risen upon earth it is time for men to do physical work, as David tells us: "The sun ariseth, and man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening" (Ps. 104:22–23). In the same way, since the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2) appeared to us in the flesh, all the time following His appearing is appropriate for spiritual work. The same prophet makes this point in another passage where, after saying of the Lord's coming, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner" (Ps. 118:22), he adds, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24). In the case of the visible sun, which is interrupted by the night, he says, "Man goes forth unto his work until the evening", but as the Sun of righteousness knows no evening, and has, according to the epistle, "no variableness neither shadow of turning" (Jas. 1:17), it offers an unbroken opportunity for spiritual labour.

2. If, however, it were necessary to name the most appropriate season of all, and if, just as there is a time to sow and a time to reap,

a time to plant and a time to harvest, and a time for everything else (*cf.* Eccl. 3:1–8), you are looking for a season especially suited for beginning a good work, then it is autumn, particularly this month, which is our first month and the start of the year, when our salvation had its origin, as we celebrate today.[637] This sacred feast and holiday that we are keeping is the first to commemorate our recall and re-creation according to grace, for on it all things began to be made new, enduring precepts began to be brought in instead of temporary ones, the spirit instead of the letter, the truth instead of shadows.

3. Today[638] a new world and a mysterious paradise have been revealed, in which and from which a New Adam came into being, re-making the Old Adam and renewing the universe. He is not led astray by the deceiver, but deceives him, and bestows freedom on those enslaved to sin through his treachery. Today a paradoxical book has been made ready on earth, which in an indescribable way can hold, not the imprint of words, but the living Word Himself; not a word consisting of air, but the heavenly Word; not a word that perishes as soon as it is formed, but the Word who snatches those who draw near Him from perdition; not a word made by the movement of a man's tongue, but the Word begotten of God the Father before all ages. Today the living tabernacle of God not made with hands appears, the inspired human ark of the true bread of life sent down from heaven for us (*cf.* John 6:32ff). Today, according to the Psalms, "Truth has sprung up from the earth", the true image of human nobility which comes from above, "and righteousness has looked down from heaven" (Ps. 85:11 LXX). This righteousness has deposed the unrighteous ruler from his unjust dominion, after being wrongfully condemned by him and rightly condemning him, and having bound the strong and evil one, plundered his goods (*cf.* Matt. 12:29), and transformed them, rendering them receptive to divine righteousness. Thus Christ took sin's prisoners to live with Him for ever, justifying them by faith in Him, but He bound the prince of sin with inescapable bonds, and delivered him to eternal fire without light. Today, as prophesied, out of the "stem of Jesse" a rod has come forth (*cf.* Isa. 11:1), from which a flower has grown which knows no wilting. This rod recalls our human nature, which had withered and fallen away from the unfading garden of delight, makes it bloom again, grants it to flourish for ever, brings it up to heaven, and leads it into paradise. With this rod the great Shepherd moves His human flock to eternal pastures, and supported

by this rod, our nature lays aside its old age and feeble senility, and easily strides towards heaven, leaving the earth below for those who, devoid of support, are plunging downwards.

4. But who is the new world, the mysterious paradise, the paradoxical book, the inspired tabernacle and ark of God, the truth sprung from the earth, the much-extolled rod of Jesse? It is the Maiden who before and after childbearing is eternally virgin, whose birth from a barren mother we celebrate today. Joachim and Anna lived together blamelessly before God, but seemed to the Israelites to be at fault according to the law because they remained childless. Since there was not yet any hope of immortality, the continuance of the race was seen as an absolute necessity. Now that this Virgin born today has bestowed eternity upon us by bearing a child in virginity, having children to succeed us is no longer necessary, but in those days having many children was regarded as superior to virtue, and childlessness was such a great evil, that these just people were rebuked for their lack of children, rather than praised for their virtue. Deeply saddened by these reproaches, the righteous couple called to mind Abraham and Sarah, and the others who had suffered grief because of their childlessness. They then considered the healing remedy for that sorrow, which some had found, and decided that they too would resort to beseeching God. The chaste Joachim departed to the wilderness and dwelt there, fasting and offering up prayer to God that he might become a father. And before he ceased praying or returned thence, he received full assurance that his request would be granted. Meanwhile, the like-minded Anna shut herself in a nearby garden and cried to the Lord with pain in her heart, "Hear me, O God of my fathers, and bless me, as you blessed Sarah's womb." And the Lord heard them and blessed them, and promised to give them a child.[639] Now He has fulfilled this promise and has granted them a daughter more wonderful than all the wonders down through the ages, the Mother of the Creator of the universe, who made the human race divine, turned earth into heaven, made God into the Son of man, and men into the sons of God. For she conceived within herself without seed, and brought forth in a way past telling, the one who brought everything that exists out of non-being, and transformed it into something good, who will never let it cease to exist.

5. Why did she come from a barren womb? In order to put an end to her parents' sorrow, transform their disgrace, and prefigure that deliverance from the grief and curse of the forefathers of the human

race, which was to come about through her. She alone dwelt in the Holy of Holies, and she alone became the abode of the Creator of the natural order, so how could nature dare profane the womb in which she rested, and from which she came forth? Neither before nor after her had there appeared a virgin mother or a mother of God, and no one before or after her had dwelt in the Holy of Holies, so it was fitting that no other infant was seen to have been conceived within her mother's womb before or afterwards. As the Mother of God had to be a virgin of David's stock, born at the right moment for our salvation, the time drew near and the Virgin had to be made ready, but even among David's descendants no others were found at that time superior in virtue or in nobility of character and birth to that childless couple. So those without children were preferred to those with many, that the Daughter with all virtues might be born of highly virtuous parents, the All-pure of those who were exceptionally chaste, and that chastity, conceiving through prayer and asceticism, might as a consequence become the mother of virginity, virginity which would bring forth without corruption the divinity begotten of the virgin Father before all ages. What wings that prayer had! How boldly it approached God! How spotlessly pure their hearts must have been to offer a prayer which so speedily achieved so much! A miracle was needed to prepare the way for the great wonder, and nature had gradually to give way to grace.

6. But you, O sacred audience, who listen to my words, my human flock and field in Christ, offer your exercise of the virtues and your progress in them as a birthday gift to the Mother of God: both men and women, elderly people along with younger ones, rich and poor, leaders and subjects, those of absolutely every race, age, rank, profession and branch of learning. Let none of you have a soul which is barren and without fruit. Let nobody be unloving or unreceptive to the spiritual seed. May each of you eagerly accept this celestial seed, the word of salvation (*cf.* Luke 8:11), and by your own efforts bring it to perfection as a heavenly work and fruit pleasing to God. Let no one make a beginning of a good work which brings no fruit to perfection (*cf.* Luke 8:14), nor declare his faith in Christ only with his tongue. "Not every one", it says, "that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21), and, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

7. Virgins who are vowed to the monastic life, and those of you who have done well and returned to live in a community of virgins after being

married,[640] and all of you in general who have chosen to live together in this way out of a desire to repent: live according to God in all things on account of the Virgin born on this day for our sake, who as a virgin gave birth according to the flesh to Him who was begotten of the virgin Father before eternity. Live for her and the only God, who was incarnate of her, looking only to Him, making Him your sole delight, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation (Rom. 12:12), obedient to those in authority over you, serving one another, striving for peace one with another, waiting constantly with attention and prayer and contrition of soul, with both psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19). Be pure and unsullied in body and soul, in all your senses and your understanding, and show forth in all respects your spiritual and virginal way of life. Thus, according to the Psalm, you shall follow behind the Mother of God, and be brought as her companions (*cf.* Ps. 45:14), and enter the temple not made with hands of the King of heaven, into the heavenly and eternal bridechamber of incorruption.

8. Those of you who are married should not surrender yourselves entirely to this world. For the Mother of God, this newly established world higher than the world, appeared today as the fruit of married life. You who are old, demonstrate that your thinking is worthy of old age, and do not imitate youth's rashness in your words, thoughts and actions to your own detriment, being carnally minded and living according to the flesh. Young people, emulate the elderly, respect them and obey them. Do not be ignorant of how honourable old age is, or that youth is not inferior to august old age. If you are unaware of this, ask the wise Solomon and you will hear, "If men have understanding, they have grey hairs enough, and an unspotted life is the true ripeness of old age" (Wisd. 4:9). Those of you who possess an abundance of the unstable goods of this world, which slip away and often pass from one person to another, will, by giving them away, trade them for eternal life for yourselves. "For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). As for those of you who lack necessities, be rich in patience and thanksgiving to God, that you may be numbered with those poor whom He pronounces blessed, and inherit the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3; Luke 6:20). Rulers, "execute true judgment" (Zech. 7:9), and do not use force against those in your power, which is unjust, but show a fatherly disposition towards them, bearing in mind that you are of the same race as they and a

fellow-servant.[641] Nor should you be unjustifiably vexed on account of submission to the Church and its teaching, for these things are a sure proof of men of good will. Subjects, you ought only to obey your rulers in matters which do not deprive you of our promised hope of the kingdom of heaven (*cf.* Matt. 22:21).[642]

9. Offer now with one accord to the Virgin, whose feast we keep today, the most desirable and appropriate gift, your sanctification and bodily purity through self-control and prayer. See, all of you, how chastity, fasting and prayer, linked with contrition, made Joachim and Anna the parents of a divine vessel, a vessel chosen not just to bear the name of God, like St. Paul (Acts 9:15)[643] who was to be born later, but to bear Him "whose name is Wonderful" (*cf.* Isa. 9:6, Ps. 8:1 Lxx). If we persevere in our prayers, as well as the other virtues, continuing in God's temple with understanding, we shall find stored up within ourselves that purity of heart, which holds God and manifests Him to us. It is this purity, and the soul's corresponding disposition towards God, that Isaiah calls the spirit of salvation within the womb, saying to the Lord, "On account of thy fear, O Lord, we have been with child, we have been in travail, we have conceived the spirit of thy salvation which we have wrought upon earth" (Isa. 26:18 Lxx). Do you see how barren, fruitless souls bear fine children? However, after the words we have quoted the prophet adds, "We shall not fall, but the inhabitants of the earth shall fall", meaning those who wallow in earthly thoughts and passions.

10. If we too, brethren, wish to dwell not on earth but in heaven, and not to fall to the ground or into sin that pulls us down, but to reach out continuously towards the divine heights, let us fear God, abstain from everything evil, return to Him through good works, and strive by self-control and prayer to wipe out the evil accretions within us, to change our inner thoughts for the better, and, according to the prophet, to be in labour with the spirit of salvation and bring it to birth, having as our helper, through invoking her name, the Virgin who was today bestowed upon her parents through prayer and a manner of life pleasing to God. She transformed their sorrow, annulled the ancestral curse, and brought our first Mother's pangs to an end, painlessly bearing Christ in her virginity.[644]

11. To whom belong all glory, honour and worship together with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FORTY-THREE

On the Gospel Reading For The Seventeenth Sunday of Matthew About the Canaanite Woman[645]

ALSO CONCERNING MAN'S BASENESS[646] AND PRAISEWORTHY HUMILITY

THAT "GOD RESISTETH THE PROUD, but giveth grace unto the humble" (Prov. 3:34 Lxx, Jas. 4:6) was wisely foretold by Solomon, the Son of David, but made manifest through the very actions of the pre-eternal Wisdom of the heavenly Father, while living this life in the flesh. Whereas the Lord opposed the Pharisees and scribes, who exalted themselves above His disciples and disdained God's laws, asking them, "Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" (Matt. 15:3), He gave grace to the Canaanite woman who humbly drew near and entreated Him. When she, a Gentile, heard the Lord call her a dog, or rather the lowest of dogs (literally "little dog"),[647] she replied, with emphatic self-condemnation[648] and humility, "Truth, Lord" (Matt. 15:27). The teachers of Israel, by contrast, were offended on hearing from the Lord that they were hypocrites, because they denied God while making a show of piety (*cf.* Matt. 15:7–12). When the Lord had not only rightly addressed them in this way, but had left them, to indicate that their whole race would later be abandoned, He departed, according to the words of today's Gospel reading, into a Gentile area, "into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold", it says, "a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil" (Matt. 15:21–22).

2. In fact the Canaanite woman did not merely come out from those heathen coasts, but sprang up from the valleys like a sacred lily, exhaling with her words the fragrance of the divine Spirit from her mouth. If "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3), who can doubt that the Canaanite woman's tongue was moved by the divine Spirit when she called Him Son of David and Lord, and appealed to His mercy, as He had authority against demons. According to Paul, "Faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. 10:17), and by Luke's account, "The fame of Christ went out into every place of the country round about" (Luke 4:37), so when He found in the Canaanite woman a sweet-sounding vessel, His renown rang out even more loudly. She was convinced, believed, and ran eagerly towards Him, becoming both a suppliant and a preacher for all to hear, as she cried from afar, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed by a devil" (Matt. 15:22). "She has no perception of her misfortune, whereas I apprehend her suffering, my heart is aflame and I call upon Thy mercy, who as man art the Son of David, being descended from him, but as pre-eternal God art the Lord of all, by whose permission the demon harasses my daughter. And if Thou hast pity and turn towards us, that servant of Thy wrath will immediately depart." The Lord did not say a word in reply, as He wanted her faith and virtue to be demonstrated even more clearly, and also so that He might be seen to be just in inclining towards the Gentiles, not only because of the Jews' unbelief, but because the Gentiles drew Him with their faith. So when the disciples said, "Send her away; for she crieth after us", He told them, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:23–24). For seeing them falling short of their fathers' piety and virtue, He could not bear for His part to disregard them on account of their godly ancestors. For that reason He came first of all to them when He was sent by His heavenly Father.

3. "Then came the woman", it says, "and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me" (Matt. 15:25). While at a distance she sought to gain the Lord's forgiveness by her cries, but since this achieved nothing and He did not even turn towards her, she drew near, fell at His feet and called again for His help. All the same, she was sent away with insults. Nevertheless, this valiant woman with a courageous soul did not give up, and when she was treated with contempt and heard herself called not just an irrational animal, but a dirty and fierce one, whose voice was

a dog's bark rather than human speech worth listening to, she agreed and joined in ridiculing herself, but did not cease to entreat Christ.

4. Let us learn from this teacher with how much patience, humility and contrition we must persevere in our prayers. Even if we are unworthy, and even if we are sent away because we are soiled with sins, let us learn not to turn back, but to keep humbly asking from our soul. We shall receive our requests from God. When the Lord told her, "You are a Gentile woman", or rather, "an audacious, disgusting and unclean dog, and it is not right to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs" (*cf.* Matt. 15:26), the woman replied, "Yes", humbling herself and confessing to her own detriment her baseness and defilement, and judging herself unworthy to share in or partake of the body which came down from heaven to us (*cf.* John 6:33). However, she begged for mercy's sake to have the crumbs which fell from the table of those enjoying that body. "Yet the dogs", she said, "eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table" (Matt. 15:27). The woman's words are truly wise, full of understanding, and tempered with humility. "Although I am a Gentile", she said, "and confess that I am a sinner, yet even the Gentiles are provided for by God through His indescribable love for mankind and His goodness, as are all those who have sinned against Him in other ways."

5. What did He do, who forgives those who confess their sins and their heart's impiety, as the psalmist was the first to teach us? (*cf.* Ps. 32:5). He accepted the outcast, cleansed the defiled, and healed and hallowed both her daughter and her own soul, accompanying all this with praise and telling her, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matt. 15:28). He granted her this authority so that there would be no interval between His words and the healing. "And her daughter", it says, "was made whole from that very hour.". Mark tells us that the Lord said to her, "For this saying the devil is gone out of thy daughter" (Mark 7:29), meaning, because you despised yourself when others treated you with contempt, because you humbled yourself so profoundly, and even when harshly dismissed you neither despaired, nor were deceived by My reference to God's dispensation, but understood the greatness of My love for mankind and stayed praying with hope and humility to the end. "God giveth grace unto the humble" (Prov. 3:34 Lxx, Jas. 4:6), as we said at the beginning, and "He that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23:12), and "Humble thyself", it says, "and thou shalt find

favour before the Lord" (*cf.* Jas. 4:6, 10, 1 Pet. 5:6), and also "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:8).

6. Such persistence is obviously impossible without great faith. Anyone who looks into the matter will see that humility is always united with faith in Christ, and the two increase together. When in the beginning Peter caught a great multitude of fish in his nets at Christ's command, and believed completely, he said to Him, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:4–8). Again, when the centurion said humbly to Christ, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof", the Lord said of him to His followers, "Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matt. 8:8–10). So only believers have humility, and only those who are humble have faith.

7. Let us humble ourselves of our own free will, brethren, that we may demonstrate our faith in Christ and also be exalted by Him. Or rather, may we acknowledge our innate lowliness, and the fact that the misleading thoughts which sometimes arise within us are from the demons. Then let us cry out to Christ like the Canaanite woman, fall down before Him and persevere in humble prayer, and we shall obtain the grace which is given to the humbleminded, and speedily ascend to divine heights. What is the starting point of our coming into the world? Is it not almost the same as for irrational animals? Actually it is worse, because the procreation of animals did not originate from sin, whereas in our case it was disobedience that brought in marriage.[649] That is why we receive regeneration through holy baptism, which cuts away the veil which covers us from our conception. For although marriage, as a concession from God, is blameless,[650] yet our nature still bears the tokens of blameworthy events. For that reason one of our holy theologians calls human procreation, "nocturnal, servile and subject to passion",[651] and before him David said, "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5).

8. Such is our origin, but what of our birth? Surely it is much worse than the birth of irrational animals? "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children", said God to Eve (Gen. 3:16), not just, in my opinion, on account of the pains of mothers while giving birth, but also because of the sorrows of those who are born, both throughout their whole subsequent life and right from the start, as a result of which babies cry continuously, something which does not happen

with other living creatures. Only for us, it seems, is life miserable, full of grief and much to be lamented as soon as we come forth from the womb. What other creatures are wrapped up in strips of cloth and enfolded in swaddling-bands immediately after birth, as we are, and laid in a hollow cradle as if in a grave, and brought to suckle and taken away again by someone else, being unable to move on our own? Do not lambs, fawns and calves walk freely as soon as they are born, gambol around their mother, draw near unaided and take their fill of milk?[652] Even when we have been weaned and released from our restraining clothes and our immobility, we continue to be without understanding. At some point, after spending many years swimming up from the depths of irrationality, we just about attain to the age of discretion. What then? Are we superior to animals because we have emerged from those dark swirling waters, are illuminated by the light of reason and have now become sensible? Not at all. We are worse than before, insofar as the things which happen in the course of our conception and by the law of nature are passively suffered by us rather than done by us, which is why no blame is laid upon us on their accounts, nor are terrible threats of eternal punishment held over us. Sometimes when we have recovered from the dizziness of childhood and become masters of our own thoughts, we voluntarily submerge ourselves in the condemned depths of forbidden pleasures and are swept away head first into the swamps, the lowest slime and that horrible filthy current, which is our deeply sinful way of life. Then, wounded by scorpions' stings and snakebites, and torn by the teeth of wild beasts, we are so devoid of reason that we delight in our injuries and revel in having been mangled.

9. Physical desire comes upon us like a viper, and we do not flee as quickly as we can, restraining ourselves, and chasing it away with self-control and unceasing humble prayer to God. Instead, we mentally welcome it with open arms and settle down happily, alas, in eternal death. Anger attacks us like a savage lion, and instead of running away and looking for a defence to hold such a great evil at bay, namely, long-suffering and humility, we run up to it and embrace it eagerly, and let our destroyer live within us, as if it were our avenger and protector, wretches that we are. Love of money hastens to drag us down to the pit of destruction, and rather than lightening our load by means of frugality and modest possessions, which are like wings for flying up to heaven, we bind on ourselves the burdens of covetousness, which

weighs us down by desiring or acquiring as much money or valuable property as possible, and we are content to be thrown over the edge and fall down into the bottomless pit.

10. We received a mind that could govern itself and be its own master,[653] and we have made it the slave of irrational passions. Unlike all other living creatures, we were honoured with reason,[654] and have turned it into the servant of such vices that we have become less honourable than brute beasts. We received a body formed by God's hands, with the potential to become spiritual if we turned towards God, but because of our inclination towards earthly things, we made even our spirit into flesh, and have become of less worth than lifeless objects, self-condemned with only ourselves to blame. For inanimate things stay the same as they were made, but we have rendered ourselves useless by rejecting the purpose for which we came into being and turning our honour into disgrace. If someone whose rôle it is to correct others joins his underlings in committing immorality and helps those to whom he should be teaching self-control[655] to find and contrive ways to be impure, is he not more foul and despicable than those who are not appointed to such a rôle and behave licentiously? If a teacher of philosophy shares his pupils' stupidity and assists them to become more foolish, is he not more unintelligent than the most ignorant of men? If a highly trained architect plays with children and builds what they call sand-castles, is he not more ridiculous than those who know no better?

11. Such is man. He has less sense than animals and is the most dishonourable and wretched of all creatures, inasmuch as he is enslaved to his body and is made worse by the very passions which ought to be subjugated to him and changed for the better. Yet he is proud and thinks highly of himself if he has more of those vices which undermine his character than other people, as he can enjoy himself, be acquisitive, and despise, overpower and control others. That is why some people who devote themselves to such passions have pleasure, wealth, empty fame and power as a result.

12. There are men, however, who have either retained their sacred honour or restored it after it was overturned. Bringing into submission the passive aspect of their irrational soul,[656] they gave to each of its faculties its due. Some of its impulses they educated, to others they taught self-control, others they tamed,[657] though obviously not without God's help and grace. As has been demonstrated time

and time again, and as we have been taught today by the wonderful Canaanite woman, it is to the humbleminded that this grace is given. Only the humble are more honourable than irrational animals and are truly human. Those who are not humble are not human beings, or are even worse than beasts in their minds, although they may be men by nature. That is why, after listing every aspect of life and dismissing it as worthless, Solomon adds, "Fear God", that is to say, be humble before Him, "and keep his commandments, for there is no more to man than this" (*cf.* Eccles. 12:13).

13. Therefore, brethren, when someone is stirred up to arrogance and pride by one of his natural qualities or something external he has made his own, he must understand that he is blunting his faith in God, falling away from divine grace, all but destroying his existence as a man, and becoming the least honourable of creatures and more mindless than brute beasts.[658] Let him quickly correct himself by returning to humility through repentance, that he may be found by God among the merciful in the age to come (*cf.* Matt. 5:7), be praised as faithful and wise (Matt. 24:45, Luke 12:42), and be glorified by the Son of God who humbled Himself for us, with true, unchanging and eternal glory.

14. May we all attain to this by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, together with whom glory belongs to the Father and the Holy Spirit unto all ages. Amen.

HOMILY FORTY-FOUR

On the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian Who Was Especially Beloved of Christ

ALSO ABOUT LOVE FOR GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOUR

TODAY WE CELEBRATE THE FEAST of one of Christ's chosen apostles,[659] and extol him as the father of all those called by Christ's name, and in particular as patriarch of those "which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). As Jacob produced twelve patriarchs according to the flesh, from whom the twelve tribes of Israel came into being (Gen. 35:22–26), so spiritually[660] Jesus gave us the twelve initiates into His mystery (Matt. 10:2–4, Mark 3:14–19, Luke 6:13–16, and Acts 1:13).[661] When one of them wretchedly fell away (Matt. 27:5, Acts 1:16–20), the great St. Paul, upon whom Christ had looked down from heaven (*cf.* Acts 9:3), made up the number.[662] If we do not see the same number of tribes originating from the apostles, that is nothing at all strange, for spiritual things are divided without losing their unity. In the same way, our body apparently has five senses, but our soul's perception is single, divided yet united. The twelve wells of water by which the Israelites, under Moses' leadership, encamped and quenched their thirst after travelling in the desert foreshadowed these twelve men (Exod. 15:27). For by providing spiritual water they delivered the human race, which had previously been walking through the trackless wastes of atheism, from the burning heat of mad idolatry. Similarly, the twelve stones which Joshua, son of Nun, set up as a sign in Gilgal after the Israelites had miraculously crossed the Jordan on foot (Josh. 4:9), foreshadowed the twelve apostles, for they are an everlasting sign to us that the true Jesus held back the river of sin that was engulfing the world and allowed those who obeyed Him to pass along life's path without sin, just as in earlier days He let the Israelites cross the Jordan dry-shod.

2. But characteristics such as these, and the fact of being called by none other than Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, are common to all the apostles. The one whose feast we now celebrate, however, was not just called as an apostle, but also numbered among the elect; and not simply chosen out of every nation under heaven, but selected from among those chosen ones as leader of the circle of leaders, that is to say, of the other apostles, and was of equal rank with Peter and James. Together with these two he was taken aside by the Saviour, led up Mount Tabor, heard Moses and Elijah speaking to Christ, and saw by divine providence that great and extraordinary spectacle, the radiance of the light of the Son's divinity which flashed brighter than lightning in a way defying description. He heard the Father's voice referring to Christ alone, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:1–5). In this blessed fashion John was made a disciple not just of the Son but of the Father Himself.

3. But even this John has in common with Peter and James, Christ's foremost disciples, just as he shares his rôle of evangelist with his fellow writers of the Holy Gospel, the words of eternal life, though he far surpassed them in his eloquence and sublime theology. As for those blessings which were uniquely his, what words can adequately portray them? He alone, not only of the apostles, but of all eminent men before and after him, was called "virgin" by everyone,[663] for it seems that he alone kept both soul and body, mind and senses, virginal throughout his life. Few people practise bodily virginity, but nearly everyone knows what it is, whereas perfect virginity of the soul means keeping the mind free from all association with evil.[664] So this name bears witness to the fact that John was almost sinless, and that is why he came to be beloved of Christ, who alone was sinless by nature, and he alone was characterized as the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20).

4. Can you find any higher words of praise than these descriptions? Among the rest of mankind not only do we fail to find greater

or more excellent epithets than these, but also to find both referring to the same man. Other, greater names, however, were his as well, for he is not just the beloved virgin, but the son of the Virgin, of the Virgin Mother and Mother of God herself. What Christ was to her by nature, John became to her by grace (John 19:26–27). If he alone was allotted the same mother as Christ, he alone of all men was His brother, kinsman to the Son of God, and like Him in all respects. Christ was the beloved Son (Matt. 3:17, 17:5, Mark 1:11, 9:7, Luke 3:22, 9:35, 2 Pet. 1:17), John was the beloved disciple. Christ was in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18), John leant on Jesus' breast (John 13:23). Christ was a virgin, and by His grace, so was John. Christ was the Son of the Virgin, and so was John. "The Lord thundered from the heavens" (Ps. 18:13), and John was thunder, for he, more than the others, was called thunder and the son of thunder (*cf.* Mark 3:17), a most theological thunder which resounds to the ends of the earth declaring the divine truth that in the beginning was the Word from the Father, and the Word was with God, and was God, and in Him was life and the true light, which lights every man coming into the world, by whom in the beginning all things were made (John 1:1–5, 9).

5. This thunder also revealed to us the man sent as a witness to the coming of the true light (*cf.* John 1:7), made known to us the Word Himself who came down from heaven, having been made flesh for our sake, and portrayed with the utmost clarity everything He did on earth in the flesh: His works, His passion, His resurrection after the Cross, and His subsequent return to heaven, whence He had come. All these things were written down, he says, as he saw them for us, that we might be saved (*cf.* John 20:31). He also sent out a persuasive epistle to the whole Christian community, calling all to fellowship in that eternal life, which was with the Father before all ages and was manifested to us (1 John 1:1–3). As he was amongst the foremost apostles, was particularly dear to Christ, and was called the beloved disciple, he speaks to us of the chief virtue, namely love (*cf.* Gal. 5:14), saying that God Himself is love, and anyone who has love has God, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God dwells in him in whom love dwells (*cf.* 1 John 4:16). He shows that love's energy within us is twofold, and divides it, without destroying its unity, into love for God and love for our neighbour, teaching that these two depend on one another for their existence, and calling anyone who thinks he has one without the other a liar (1 John 4:20). The sign of our love for God, he tells us, is that we keep His word and His commandments

(*cf.* John 8:31, 1 John 5:3), as the Lord Himself taught, saying, "He that loveth me will keep my commandments" (*cf.* John 14:15, 21). "This is my commandment", He said, "that ye love one another" (John 15:12), and "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

6. Do you see how love for God is inseparable from love for each other? That is why the beloved disciple says, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). Also, "He that saith he abideth in God", through love, "ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). And how did He walk? He obeyed the heavenly Father, fulfilled all righteousness, bestowed benefits on mankind, healed the sick, taught those willing to listen, reproved the disobedient, endured for the sake of the obedient being spat upon by the ungrateful, being struck, mocked, scourged and finally subjected to a shameful death. He gave His life for us, and there is no greater act of love than that (*cf.* John 15:13). But we also see that His beloved disciple was His follower in deeds. For he clearly went through all the Teacher's instructions, miracles and sufferings, benefiting everyone with his words and actions, bringing people out of darkness into light, making the unworthy worthy, and himself suffering for their sake. He did not undergo just one death to bear witness to Jesus and for our good, in other words, out of love for God and men, but delivered himself to death throughout his whole life. How many times did he suffer mockery? How many times was he struck or stoned? How many times did this propagator of godliness appear before tyrants and rulers, having to give an account of himself and being condemned! He was also exiled to Patmos by Domitian, the cruellest tyrant of all,[665] and joyfully proclaimed the teachings of the good Lord and Teacher everywhere.

7. Let us too, brethren, obey these teachings and live as far as we can in the way Christ and His beloved disciple lived, in submission to our fathers. "For the obedient son," it says, "will live, but the disobedient is for destruction" (*cf.* Prov. 13:1 LXX). Nor should our obedience be only to our fathers in the flesh, but much more to our spiritual fathers, and through them, to our heavenly Father, "From whom every family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. 3:15). For our love, submission and obedience to our spiritual fathers is offered to God, and anyone who disobeys them clashes with our fathers' God, as

Christ made clear by saying, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16). "Obey them, brethren, that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: that they may not grieve over you: for that is unprofitable for you" (*cf.* Heb. 13:17), cries Paul the great preacher, and be eager to accomplish all righteousness and every good work. If something is lacking on account of our human frailty, the Lord is gracious and will make up for the deficiencies due to our weaknesses by means of His grace, accepting us as though our good works were perfect, particularly if He sees us humbled by our failures in virtue, and not conceited over our virtuous achievements.

8. Each of you should benefit your neighbour in all sorts of ways, by means of what you have. Are you unable to heal the sick with a miraculous word? You can still heal them with a word of encouragement. If you personally minister to someone's needs, you yourself (how amazing!) will have the Lord to serve you in the age to come, in accordance with His words. For "He shall gird himself", it says, "and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37). If, however, you share with him by giving him some of your own necessities, you will have a share in divine riches and Christ's kingdom, and will be fed on ambrosia and clothed in the royal garment of immortality, as if you had given clothing, drink and nourishment to Christ Himself (*cf.* Matt. 25:34–40). Perhaps you do not have words to teach and exhort people to be virtuous, the power to rebuke, to turn men away from evil and towards virtue? Become a teacher by your actions, doing good for yourself and your neighbour. This is also a means of rebuking transgressors. Let them say of you, "The very sight of him is an affliction to us, because his ways are different from ours" (*cf.* Wisd. 2:15). If they find you intolerable and direct insults at you, fabricate lying accusations and contrive terrible plots against you, stand firm. Do not turn aside or weaken and change your course, but be kind to yourself and to them, looking to the example of Christ and His beloved disciple. Taking them as your guide for walking the Lord's straight path, travel along it without turning back. "If they have persecuted me", said Christ, "they will persecute you" (John 15:20). If you act like this and endure these things, it will be clear to everyone that you have embraced divine love.

9. If you long to know the signs of this love within you, I will show you them, only go on tirelessly in order to find them. When you

lift your mind up to God and nothing earthly attracts it, but forgetting everything, without force and free from thoughts, you joyfully delight in the remembrance of God and prayers to Him, then be aware that you have clearly apprehended love for God and share in it for as long as this converse, or rather union with God continues.[666] Again, when you pray to the Lord with contrition and sweet pain in your heart[667] equally for yourself and for every man, known to you or unknown, friend or foe, whether or not he has grieved you, then know that you love your neighbour from your soul.[668] But these dispositions will not become yours unless you possess the visible works of love. For if you do not accustom yourself to giving up your own will and do your neighbour's, how can you endure the things that he brings upon you? If you do not courageously and patiently bear the difficulties caused by men, how will you progress to praying for your enemies?[669] If instead of obeying the one who says, "Give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you" (Luke 11:41), you withhold them, keep them in your possession, and do not use them to meet your neighbour's need, how will you shed tears for them? "Anyone who has love", said one of God's friends, "has dispersed his money. The man who says he possesses both love and money is deluded. He is either bereft of money, or bereft of love, that is to say, of God".[670] God is love, and He declares to us, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24), using the word "mammon" to mean everything we have to excess: gold, or silver, or anything else. He shows us that it is impossible for anyone who keeps money to pray, "for where", He says, "your treasure is, there will your mind be also" (*cf.* Matt. 6:21), but not in prayer. The Lord also says of such men, "This people honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me" (Matt. 15:8–9). For that reason God's beloved thunder proclaims, "Whoso hath this world's goods, and does not give to his brethren what they need, the love of God is not in him" (*cf.* 1 John 3:17). Nor can love for the world and love for God dwell in one and the same person, for love of the world is enmity towards God (Rom. 8:7, *cf.* Jas. 4:4). So John also says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15). What are these worldly things other than means of gaining money which do not benefit the soul, carnal desires, arrogant thoughts and a will set on the earth. All these things do not come from God, but separate those who possess them from Him, deaden the soul of anyone they conquer, and bury it in gold and silver earth, which is far worse than the earth with which we usually cover our human dust, in that when ordinary earth is put on top of our dead bodies, it shuts in the stench of them and makes it impossible for it to come out anywhere, but the more gold and silver dust is heaped on the mind of their owner, the worse they make him smell, until his stench reaches up to heaven and there turns back God's mercies and stops God watching over him.

10. The beloved disciple was sent by our Saviour Jesus Christ, who loved him, to teach us the whole truth (*cf.* John 16:13), raise us up from these dead works, and urge us towards works of light. He made perfectly clear that love for God and our neighbour was the culmination of these works, and capable of bringing salvation. How can we fail to love and honour him as the one who disclosed to us the truth in its entirety? So let us not, brethren, do the opposite of what he has told us. And let us not show love and faith in our speech and gestures, while disobeying him in our actions, as John himself forbade, saying, "Brethren, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

11. If we too love and honour him who was loved by God above all, let us show our love for him in deed and in truth, becoming not just hearers of his words but also doers. Thus we shall attain to the eternal life and the kingdom that he promised, in Christ Himself, the King of the ages, to whom belong eternal glory in heaven and on earth, together with His Father without beginning and the co-eternal Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FORTY-FIVE

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LUKE[671] WHICH SAYS, "AS YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE ALSO TO THEM LIKEWISE"

ALSO AGAINST USURERS

"HE WHO ALONE FASHIONED OUR HEARTS, who understands all our works" (*cf.* Ps. 33:15 LXX), who was manifested to us through flesh and deigned to become our teacher, seeks from us, now that He is re-making us, the very things which He originally put in our souls when He created them, but which have been spoilt. In the beginning He formed us in a manner that was appropriate to His future teaching, and later He renders that teaching suitable for the way we were originally made, so all He was doing was cleansing His creature's beauty which had been obscured by the addition of sin. Nothing shows this more clearly than the words of today's Gospel reading, which we propose to elucidate: "As ye would", it says, "that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31). The prophet Isaiah did well to prophesy that, "The Lord will give a brief word upon the earth" (Isa. 10:23 LXX).[672] For in this short pronouncement He included every virtue, every commandment, and virtually every good deed and thought. That is why, according to the evangelist Matthew, when the Lord had said these words, He added, "For this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12). Elsewhere, summing up His teaching, He said that all the law and the prophets hung on the two commandments to love God and love our neighbour (Matt. 22:37–40). Now, however, He has gathered everything into one and included not only the righteousness found in the law and the prophets, but absolutely every type of good deed done among men, since He is not making laws now for just one race, but for the whole world, or rather, for all those who come to Him through faith from every nation under heaven.

2. Not only did He encompass in these words each of the commandments He had given us, He also showed that every one of them is innate in us.[673] This is what James the Lord's brother is referring to when he exhorts us to "Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas. 1:21). And it is this that God declared beforehand through the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "I will make a new covenant with them; I will put my laws in their mind" (*cf.* Jer. 31:31, 33),[674] for the exercise of will based on judgement[675] is a function of the mind. Now that the Lord has revealed that all the gospel precepts are inscribed within us, He commands and ordains that we should order our lives in accordance with them. Being the lover of goodness and friend of man, He has put into our nature the knowledge of how we should act.

3. When He said, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31), the Lord was demonstrating through this summary of His counsel that every gospel commandment was not only innate in human nature, but also just, easy and to our advantage, readily comprehensible to all and self-evident. What do I mean? Surely you are aware that it is bad to be angry with your brother and pour abuse on him, especially without cause, and that you yourself are unwilling to be the object of his anger or rebuke? Nor is this an opinion that you reach after some thought; rather, you are immediately vexed when anger and insults are directed at you, and you try to avoid them in any way you can, refusing to accept them because they are obviously evil, wrong and unprofitable. You feel the same when another man looks at your wife with passion and curiosity, or when someone tells you lies, not only to harm you, but on any subject at all. In short, we feel the same about everything the gospel commandments forbid. What needs to be said about those sinful acts which the ancient law had already prohibited: murder, adultery, breaking oaths, injustice, and the like? Or about their opposite virtues and our satisfaction with people who practice them towards us? Do you see that you know for yourself each one of the commandments,

and consider it just and beneficial? Not only that, but you also deem it to be easy. Otherwise you would not think that anyone who was angry with you, told lies or schemed against you in some way, deserved much blame, if you really did suppose that it was difficult or impossible for him to abstain from each of these evils.

4. Let it not be the case that when you are badly treated by someone else, by being insulted, deceived or harmed, you make a correct judgement, but when you yourself insult your neighbour, treat him unjustly and attempt to cheat him, you form a judgement without reaching the same verdict on identical actions. As a fair judge you should not do to anyone whatever obvious evils you do not wish to suffer at his hands, and whatever good things you wish to experience from another person, let him be treated in that same way by you. Perhaps you are asking someone for assistance, or something else you need, and you really want to receive it, as you consider it beneficial? Why not? So when someone desires something from you, strive to appear self-consistent, think it good that he should receive something from you, and put it into action. What, however, if he wants from you more than you have? By means of what you do have, show that if you possessed more you would give it. "For if there be first a willing mind", says Paul, "it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Cor. 8:12). Do you want to be loved by everyone and granted pardon? Do you regard being blamed as distressing and hard to bear, especially if you have done very little wrong? Love everyone yourself, be quick to forgive, avoid passing judgment, seeing, as it were, yourself in every man, and making this the basis for your verdicts, attitudes and actions. "For so is the will of God", says Peter, the chief apostle, "that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Pet. 2:15), meaning those among us who hate without cause and are unwilling to give to others what they desire to receive from them.

5. Anyone who does not want the same things for his fellow human beings or pass the same judgment on them as he wishes for himself, is certainly foolish, particularly as this judgement and this wish are an inherent part of our nature. For it is a natural impulse in all of us to want to be loved and well treated by others as much as by ourselves. The will to do good and to be as well disposed towards all as we are towards ourselves is therefore also inborn in us. We were all made in the image of Him who is good. Then when sin entered and

multiplied, it did not extinguish our self-love, since it was not at all opposed to that, but it cooled down love for one another, the crown of the virtues, changed it and rendered it useless. As a result, He who renews our nature, recalling it to the grace of His own image and putting His laws, as the prophet tells us, in our hearts (Jer. 31:33), says, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31), and "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again" (Luke 6:32, 34).

6. In this passage, He refers to those who are not called by His name and those who do not order their lives according to the gospel, as sinners, including them all in the same category, for it is of no benefit to us to be called Christians if we act no differently from the heathen. Just as the great Paul told the Jews, "Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision" (Rom. 2:25), so now Christ tells us through the Gospel, "You who are Mine will find grace in My presence if you keep My commandments, but if you do nothing more than sinners do, loving those who love you and doing good to those who do the same to you, you will have no confidence towards Me on that account." He does not speak like this to deter people from loving or doing good or lending to those who will repay them, but He shows that such acts do not earn a reward, so they have their recompense here and now, and do not bring any grace to the soul, nor cleanse it from the ingrained defilement of sin. When these things are present they bring the soul absolutely no profit or grace by way of eternal recompense, but the lack of them causes profound guilt and loss. People who do not even love those who love and care for them in return are worse than tax collectors and sinners. So how much worse are those who repay the love and concern of others with hostile words and deeds! Such men clearly include those who rebel against the rulers of the city,[676] in spite of the fact that they shoulder the considerable burden of taking care of them every day; those who do not regard the rulers appointed by God with the good favour they deserve (*cf.* Rom. 13:1–2);[677] those who do not humble themselves under the mighty hand of God (*cf.* 1 Pet. 5:6), but disobey Christ's Church and are annoyed for no reason with the guardians of the Church, even though they exert themselves on their

behalf, and desire, pray for, and do everything good and profitable for them, as far as is in their power.

7. As for those who are unwilling to lend to borrowers who promise to repay in full and on time, but demand payment with interest, and high interest at that, and without it will not allow their tax or their money to be seen,[678] they are almost lawless and worse than sinners, obeying neither the old law nor the new covenant.[679] For this latter exhorts us to lend even to people from whom we cannot hope to receive back the loan (*cf.* Luke 6:34), whereas the ancient law states, "Thou shalt not lend thy money upon usury" (Lev. 25:37; *cf.* Deut. 23:19–20), commends the man who "putteth not out his money to usury" (Ps. 15:5), and considers it necessary to flee from the city where interest and guile are at work in the streets (*cf.* Ps. 55:11 LXX), that is to say, openly. Do you observe how the usurer deprives not only his own soul but also the community of its good reputation, inflicting on it the charge of inhumanity, and doing the whole city in general a considerable injustice? He is one of its citizens and everything he has was acquired from it, but he does not use his possessions for its good. To those who have nothing he is unwilling to lend, and to those who have something, however meagre, he lends at interest, in order cunningly to take from them what little they have to live on. Perhaps that is why the prophet links deceit and usury, saying, "I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness, for I have seen violence and strife in the city, usury and guile depart not from her streets" (Ps. 55:7, 9, 11 LXX).

8. The man who lends at interest is eager to grow rich with sins rather than money, destroying both the borrower's livelihood and his own soul. For interest payments are like a brood of vipers nesting in the bosom of those who love money, foreshadowing the fact that such men will not escape from the unsleeping worms threatened for the age to come (*cf.* Mark 9:44, 46, 48). If one of them were to say, however, "As you do not allow me to receive interest, I shall keep my surplus money by me, and shall not offer it to those who need to borrow", he should be aware that he is holding the mothers of those vipers in his breast, who will also be for him the mothers of those unsleeping worms.

9. That is why the Lord, leading us away from these evils which result from excess wealth, commands us to love and do good even to our enemies, and to lend to those who cannot repay, without giving up hope. For, He says, "Your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the

evil" (Luke 6:35). "Do not imagine", He says, "that if you do good to evildoers and give to borrowers who will not pay you back, that what is yours will be lost. For now is the time for sowing good works, but the season of harvesting them is the age to come." So do not despair during the appointed period between seedtime and harvest, but know that you will gather in what is yours many times over, just as those who do wrong now will reap their own evils. Whatever anybody sows here, he will harvest there, but with a great increase.

10. If here you make yourself like the Son of God through your actions and show yourself kind towards all, as He is kind to everyone, there you will receive likeness to Him, and more besides. The light of the glory of the Most High will shine around you, and you will be eternally with those, in whose company Christ our God will be among gods (Ps. 82:1), distributing the honours of eternal blessedness. He revealed this by adding, "And ye shall be children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35). For this purpose the Son of God bowed the heavens and came down to earth, became the Son of man, spoke and acted as He did, finally suffered and died for us, rose again and went up to heaven once more, to make us heavenly, immortal and sons of God. So the things He now asks of us, that we should love our enemies, do good, and lend to those unable to repay, are not only fitting and beneficial for us, as has already been demonstrated, but are also small in comparison with what He gave. He gave Himself for us, who not only had nothing to give in return, but who had previously shown ourselves in many ways to be ungrateful and evil. By contrast, He urges us to lend what we have in excess and to do good with what we possess. What do we have, and how much? And for the sake of these trifles He gives us in exchange likeness to Himself, sublime adoption as sons, and heavenly rewards, saying, "Be ye merciful, even as your Father which is in heaven is merciful" (Luke 6:36, *cf.* Matt. 5:48).

11. To Him, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, belong all glory unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FORTY-SIX

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LUKE[680] ON THE SUBJECT OF THE WIDOW'S CHILD RESURRECTED BY THE LORD

AND ALSO ABOUT BEING FORGIVING AND COMPASSIONATE ONE TO ANOTHER

WHEN THE GREAT PAUL is showing how divine and beneficial to all faith is, proclaiming its works and achievements, its fruits and power, he starts from the very ages[681] themselves, of which there is nothing older, saying, "Through faith we understand that the worlds[682] were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3). He ends, though, with the general resurrection which is to come,[683] and the perfection of the saints that will accompany it (Heb. 12:23), of which there is nothing more perfect. In between, listing people who were marvelled at for their faith and who themselves bore witness in support of faith, he also mentions that, through faith, "Women received their dead raised to life again" (Heb. 11:35). These were the women of Zarephath and the Shunammite, the first of whom received her dead son alive again from Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:19–24), while the second, the Shunammite, received hers from Elisha (2 Kgs. 4:32–37).

2. Both of them showed great faith through their actions. In faith the woman of Zarephath anticipated the increase in provisions promised by the prophet, and fed him before her own children from the handful of flour and the little oil which were all she had to eat before dying with her children. Even when, after Elijah's arrival, her

son fell ill and died – "His sickness", it says, "was so sore, that there was no breath left in him" (1 Kgs. 17:17) – she did not send the prophet away, or blame him, or turn aside from the piety she had been taught by him. Instead, she accused herself, and thought that her own sins were the cause of the misfortune. When the disaster happened, she called Elijah "man of God", reproaching herself rather than him, and saying to him, more in exhortation than in mockery, "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" (1 Kgs. 17:18). "You share in the light", she tells him, "as the servant of the light of righteousness, and when you came you revealed my hidden transgressions, and these have killed my son." Do you see the foreign woman's faith? Do you observe her humility? For this reason she was rightly chosen by God in the beginning, was deemed worthy to become a prototype[68.4] for the Gentiles' calling and faith, and later she also received her son alive.

3. As for the Shunammite, she demonstrated her faith by what she said about Elisha to her husband (2 Kgs. 4:9), the preparations she made for receiving the prophet as a guest (2 Kgs. 4:10), and the prudence she showed when her son died: she quietly hid the misfortune, ran to the man of God and persuaded him to come to her home, saying to him, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee" (2 Kgs. 4:21–30). And because of this faith she received her son from the prophet restored to life. So the extraordinary miracle was due not so much to the prophets as to the faith of the mothers who received their resurrected children, as Paul revealed by saying, "Women received their dead raised to life again" (Heb. 11:35).

4. However, even though the prophets were assisted by the mothers' faith and the fact that they were well-pleasing to God, Elijah, for his part, did the rest, and cried out to God with the words, "Alas, O Lord, who art the witness of the widow with whom I sojourn, hast thou brought evil upon her by slaying her son?" (1 Kgs. 17:20 LXX). He called upon the Lord and said, "O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again" (1 Kgs. 17:21). As for Elisha, he not only clung to the child, walking about and returning seven times, but he also, according to the Scripture, prayed to the Lord, and that was how he brought the Shunammite's son back to life (2 Kgs. 4:34–35 LXX).

5. Our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the words of today's Gospel reading, had compassion on the widow, whose dead son was being carried out (Luke 7:13), and without taking thought, making an effort,

or praying,[685] by His command alone He gave back to his grieving mother her only son, alive instead of dead, thus showing that He alone is the Lord of life and death. "It came to pass the day after", says the evangelist, "that Jesus went into a city called Nain" (Luke 7:11). The Lord comes to this great miracle of resurrection unbidden,[686] to show not only His life-giving power but His incomparable goodness and compassion. The woman of Zarephath urged Elijah to restore her child to life by seeming to mock him, and the Shunammite, having first told Elisha about the misfortune,[687] as he had no foreknowledge of it, then compelled him by saying, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee" (2 Kgs. 4:21–30). By contrast, the Lord knew on his own beforehand what had happened, and, without being summoned by anybody, He went to the town out of which the dead boy was being carried.

6. "The day after", it says, "he went", and the evangelist in his great wisdom stresses this fact. For the resurrection of the widow's son serves as a pattern for the renewal of our mind. Our soul was widowed of the heavenly bridegroom on account of sin, and her mind was like her only son, who had been killed by the sting of sin, and lost true life. This child was being carried away by the passions that were presumably taking him even further away from God to hell and the depths of destruction. But when the Lord drew near and stood by us, He immediately renewed our mind and raised it up by His advent in the flesh.[688] He did not, however, come to us in the beginning, but later, in the last times. The evangelist does not omit even this, saying, "The day after, Jesus went" – to raise up the dead son of the widow and to transform her mourning into joy. I beseech you, brethren, to pay heed to what is being said. For if each one of you is aware of the dead man within him and laments over his own sins, mourning and grieving over them in repentance, the Comforter will approach him too, bestowing eternal life and consolation. "Blessed", it says, "are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4).

7. "Jesus went", it says, "and many of his disciples went with him, and much people" (Luke 7:11). When Elijah was going to restore the son of the woman of Zarephath to life he withdrew by himself (1 Kgs. 17:19), and Elisha went up to the upper room where the dead child was lying, "and he shut the door", as the account tells us, "upon them twain" (2 Kgs. 4:33) – on the Shunammite and on his own disciple, Gehazi. Since they needed

to pray most earnestly to God, and people can naturally immerse their minds more completely and lift them up wholly to God when they are in solitude, the prophets separated themselves even from those closest to them. The Lord, on the other hand, truly possessing power over life and death, and having absolutely no need of prayer to bring the child to life, not only had His disciples with Him, but also a large crowd, some of whom He brought with Him, and others whom He met around the body being carried out. In the sight and hearing of everyone He restored the dead man to life by His command alone, doing so publicly out of love for mankind, that he might draw all towards saving faith in Him. "Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out", for he foreknew even at what time they would bring him out and arrived at the right moment, "There was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow" (Luke 7:12).

8. The very circumstances which increased the grieving mother's sorrow many times over brought about her extraordinary deliverance. For when the Lord saw the mother, a widowed mother who had set all her hopes on her only child, who had been deprived of him by untimely death and was now following her son's bier mourning piteously, "He had compassion", it says – and how could the "Father of the fatherless, and judge of widows" (Ps. 68:5) fail to do so? – "and said unto her", consoling her, and foreseeing what was to happen, "Weep not" (Luke 7:13). Whereas He was aware of what He was going to do, the woman did not even know who He was, and certainly not what was about to take place, so she did not have faith or ask anything of Him. Nor did He require faith of her, but, being able to do all things and not needing the co-operation of believers, "He came and touched the bier", to show that His body too had life-giving power, as being wholly one with God,[689] "and he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up" (Luke 7:14–15). "Deaf dust", then, heard Him calling into being things which have no being,[690] heard Him who upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3), heard not the voice of a God-bearing man, but of God made man. And not only "did the dead man sit up", but he "began to speak". In the case of the son of the widow of Zarephath, too, when the child's soul came into him again he immediately cried out, according to the account (1 Kgs. 17:22 LXX). And this is an example which proves that the resurrection is not imaginary.[691]

9. Elijah resurrected one person by prayer, and Elisha one during his lifetime and another after his death (2 Kgs. 13:21), as a pledge and foreshowing of Christ's life-giving energy as God and man. The Lord raised three people to life by a word of command before the Cross: this widow's son, the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue (Luke 8:41–42, 49–56),[692] and Lazarus who had been dead four days (John 11:17–45). On the Cross, however, He raised numerous dead people, who "appeared unto many" (Matt. 27:52–53). Besides this, He resurrected Himself after His death for us through the Cross, or rather, He rose again on the third day, having become the sole prince of eternal life (*cf.* Acts 3:15). All the others, even though they were resurrected, shared once more in this mortal life of ours. Now that Christ, however, has risen from the dead, "death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9). That is why the Lord alone has become "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20), that is to say, of those believers who have departed hence in the hope of resurrection and eternal life. He became the firstfruits of them that sleep and "the firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18) and guaranteed and promised us, not this mortal life of ours which is subject to death, inasmuch as it is governed by a merely natural life-force, but the divine, immortal and eternal life which is laid up for us in hope. For this is His gift, truly worthy of God.[693] Since, therefore, He does not bestow eternal life on those raised by Him here, but only life cut short by death, He does not grant it as a favour to them themselves, but does so for the sake of others, in order to lead them to faith, which procures eternal life.[694] In this passage too, He did not restore the son to life for his own sake, but because of his mother, as He had compassion on her, as the evangelist clearly relates; which is why, once He had resurrected him, "He delivered him to his mother" (Luke 7:15).

10. Do you see how the Lord, pitying the widow who was mourning her son, did not just use consoling words to her, but helped her through His actions? As far as we are able, we too should do the same, and not be sympathetic to those who suffer just with words, but demonstrate our compassion for them through our deeds. If we show that we are doing good with all our strength, God will reward us by showing beneficence towards us with all His might in return. But take note how sublimely excellent this reward is. To the same extent that God is superior to man, so His power exceeds man's strength, and the kindness accomplished by this power outstrips that shown by

us. If someone asked for coppers and gave gold coins in return, who would not welcome the exchange? Now, however, we are not going to barter "copper coins for gold",[695] both of them metals with about the same natural value, but to give what is human and gain what is divine, to give fellow human beings things proper to mankind, which is a natural obligation. For by our very nature we are bound to be compassionate and merciful one to another.[696] If we observe God's manifold mercies towards us, for which all He demands from us in exchange is readily to pardon one another, share with one another, and be charitable,[697] saying, "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you" (Luke 6:37–38), how can we fail to render as an inescapable duty, forgiveness and mercy in practical ways to our brethren in need, as far as we can?

11. Not only have we been granted mercy and countless benefits by God, but we have also obtained pledges from Him that we shall receive our recompense in good measure and commensurate with the good we do our brethren.[698] So why do we not hasten as fast as we can towards this reward? Why do we not lay down our life for one another, should the need arise, imitating the Master, that we may gain eternal life from Him in exchange? Indeed, we are obliged to lay down our life, perhaps not for one another, but for Him who delivered Himself to death for our sake, not just as a ransom (*cf.* Matt. 20:28), but as an example and practical lesson, incomparably surpassing every deed, word and understanding.[699] "To this end", it says, "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21), and be ready, if need be, to lay down our life to fulfil His commandments. Thus we shall share in the everlasting life and kingdom which are in Him, living for ever in His company and glorified with Him (*cf.* Rom. 8:17). Consider the Myrrhstreamer, the approaching feast of whose martyrdom we began to celebrate today.[700] He willingly shed his body's blood for Christ, and for that reason Christ has made him an everflowing and inexhaustible source of all kinds of miracles, of sanctification of soul and body, and of most fragrant and hallowed myrrh. Whereas the Greatmartyr's soul has now justly received eternal and unchanging glory with the angels in heaven, his body does not yet share in this glory, but what happens now is an example, figure and symbol[701] of the divine and heavenly glory that will be revealed around his body.[702]

And if the example and figure be so great, what will that future perfection be like? Surely, both ineffable and inconceivable.[703]

12. By the intercessions of the Myrrhstreamer among martyrs,[704] may we too, who share in the holy myrrh that flows from him, also see and partake then of that glory, by the grace and love for mankind of Jesus Christ, who is glorified in His martyrs and is God over all (Rom. 9:5), to whom belong all glory for unending ages. Amen.

HOMILY FORTY-SEVEN

On the Gospel For the Fourth Sunday of Luke Which Says, "A Sower Went Out to Sow His Seed"[705]

ALSO ABOUT THE CULTIVATING WE OUGHT TO DO BEFORE THE SOWING

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST chose His disciples not from the wise, not from the noble, not from the rich or the famous, but from among fishermen and tentmakers and poor and illiterate men. This was to make clear to all that neither poverty, nor lack of learning, nor lowly origins, nor anything else of that sort is an impediment to acquiring virtue and understanding the divine sayings and the mysteries of the Spirit. But even the poorest and lowliest and least educated person, if he gives proof of eagerness and an appropriate inclination towards what is good, can not only come to know the divine teaching but also become a teacher himself through God's grace. And the things that hinder us from understanding and grasping the meaning of spiritual teachings are our own indifference[706] and the fact that we cling with all our might to the fleeting concerns of this life. As a result, we do not allow space or time for listening and studying and recalling to mind what we have heard, nor do we care about the things which are to come and things eternal.

2. Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than today's Gospel reading (Luke 8:5–15). After the Lord had addressed the people using a parable, the disciples approached Him privately and sought to learn the purpose and meaning of the parable He had related on that occasion. They asked why He spoke to the people in parables which

were not readily comprehensible. Then the Lord answered them, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand" (Luke 8:10).

3. One might be so bold as to ask Him, "Why is this, Lord? You who are the only Guide of all men, the only universal Master and Provider, only Father[707] and Saviour of all, the light of those lying in the darkness of ignorance, the light that "lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9),[708] do You now only illumine Your chosen disciples, and speak obscurely to the rest, lest they should understand and be enlightened?" "Yes", replies the Lord, "man is the only living creature in this world that I wished to create with freedom of choice. I did not come into the world to destroy this handiwork of Mine which had been spoilt, but to rescue it. For that reason, I never draw anyone by force. According to My righteous judgment, only those people who choose, long and seek to put the knowledge of salvation into practice are worthy to be enlightened. 'For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened' (Luke 11:10). In My surpassing love for mankind, however, I also address those outside this category, without making Myself clear, that I might give them motivation and encouragement to choose and learn how to search out My teaching in order to practice it. For in this way it will be granted to them too to know the mysteries of God's kingdom. This knowledge", He says, "has been given to you who seek more diligently on your own account to put into action what you have learnt. For it is not mere knowledge that is good, but knowledge translated into deeds, and action in accordance with reason. 'For not the hearers of the law', says the Scripture, 'but the doers of the law shall be justified' (Rom. 2:13)."

4. Do you see, brethren, that the fact that we do not easily understand or grasp the holy teaching is due to our own inaction and indifference?[709] I say this now to your charity, having been appointed as your teacher, for reasons known to the Lord.[710] If anyone is unable to understand the meaning of my teachings in church in all respects, he should come and ask me privately, and with the help of God, who gives me utterance "at the opening of my mouth" (Eph. 6:19), he will hear more clearly and will put what he hears into practice, on account of his persistence in asking.[711]

5. Let us now look at the parable from the beginning. "A sower went out to sow his seed" (Luke 8:5). The grace of the Spirit rightly ordained that this parable should be read in church in the hearing of all just at this time, for now is the season for sowing, and most people are striving to sow their land with seeds that originate from the earth. Anyone who sows crops every year is sowing perishable seed, which will not sprout unless it dies. Obviously, therefore, he will harvest and reap perishable things, temporary sustenance for the flesh that will soon come to nothing. Through this parable we shall teach you, however, what spiritual and imperishable seeds are, when it is time to sow them, who sows them, and what type of land is able to receive them, so that we may not toil merely in the hope of the harvest which nourishes us for a short time, but may do everything in the hope of that harvest which will provide us with eternal life. "A sower", it says, "went out to sow his seed" (Luke 8:5). Who is he? The Lord Himself, who through the psalmist foretold concerning Himself, "I will open my mouth in parables" (Ps. 78:2 Lxx, Matt. 13:35). But whence did He come out, who is everywhere present? Whither did He come, who is absent from nowhere? Again He said of Himself, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world" (John 16:28). Without being separated from the Father's bosom He who is in the world and by whom the world was made (John 1:10), came out and entered the world. He who fills heaven and earth came down from heaven to earth. Consequently, the coming forth of the only-begotten Son of God, and His descent from heaven, represent nothing other than His manifestation in the flesh and His self-emptying, from the unutterable exaltation of divinity down to human nature at the other extreme.

6. He came out in this way "to sow his seed". What seed is this? The word of instruction, the words of eternal life, the commandments of immortality, the promise of restoration to life, and the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. These all belong to Him, for He said of Himself, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63); and Peter told Him, "Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Such seed is His alone and He alone ceaselessly sows it, showing in this way that He is God over all (Rom. 9:5). Every teacher, evangelist and preacher of godliness and pious living also sows the words of life, the word of evangelical and heavenly teaching, but once he has served God's will in his generation he departs, nor did he exist previously. Moreover, the word of salvation which he sows

by teaching is not his own but belongs to God, who assists him and "gives utterance at the opening of his mouth" (Eph. 6:19).

7. Our Lord Jesus Christ, however, being true God, has this seed of eternal life as His own possession, and is always sowing it through the natural law in creation,[712] through the law given in writing to the Israelites,[713] through the prophetic word,[714] and later through the gospel of grace.[715] So the season for such sowing is the entire life-time of every person, or rather, the whole period from the Lord's advent until the end of the world. Harvest time for this seed will be at the Lord's second coming and manifestation, which we await. That is why the apostle says, "He that ploweth should plow in hope" (1 Cor. 9:10), and "He that soweth to the Spirit shall reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:8). Also the psalmist says, "They that sow in tears" now "shall reap in joy" at that time (Ps. 126:5).

8. The Lord went out to sow His seed. Where? In people's hearts, for these are the fields which receive spiritual seeds. Some of them resemble a path, as they have been trampled down and pressed solid by evil thoughts and passions, and by the most wicked demons who oversee these things. Those who are like rocky ground are unable, on account of their faint-heartedness and hardness,[716] to hold on to the seeds of teaching to the end, or to bear fruit through them for eternal life. As for those who resemble ground which brings forth thorns, they are intent on possessions and wealth, fleeting pleasures and what springs from these.

9. Since many differences can be observed between the hearts of men, "A sower", it says, "went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it" (Luke 8:5). Some seed, it says, fell beside the path, meaning either into hearts which were outside the right way of the Lord (*cf.* Acts 13:10), in which case it was trampled underfoot by the evil demons who walk about in trackless places, or else into hearts on the demons' evil path, such that the birds, the evil spirits in the air, ate it up and destroyed it; and so it is as though these people never heard God's word at all. "Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved" (Luke 8:12). "And some fell", it says, "upon a rock" (Luke 8:6), though Matthew says, "upon stony places" (Matt. 13:5), meaning, on a hard unyielding heart within which the word cannot develop, or take a vigorous hold, or put down roots.

So "as soon as it was sprung up", it says, "it withered away, because it lacked moisture" (Luke 8:6). That is to say, they endured for a while, and seemed to grow to some extent, then when temptations came upon them they disappeared, as they were incapable of bringing fruit to perfection, because of the weakness of their resolve.[717] "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13). "And some fell among thorns" (Luke 8:7), hearts entirely devoted to the fleeting material things of this life, and submerged in the concerns and delights which come from them. Once such thorns have grown up alongside the seed, they choke and obliterate it completely. "That which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" (Luke 8:14).

10. In this way, the Lord casts out and rejects those who pay no attention to the divine Spirit's teaching (the ones who fall by the wayside), and those who take notice but only for a short time (those who resemble stony ground), and also those who accept and retain a knowledge of it, but are corrupted by wealth and glory and self-indulgence (these are the fields full of thorns). He then uses the parable to introduce and set before us those people well-pleasing to God, saying, "Other fell on good ground" (Luke 8:8), that is to say, a soul with a good and noble disposition,[718] which eagerly receives the word of instruction and holds on to it, without allowing itself to be used as a channel for the enemies of its salvation to pass through,[719] and which patiently watches over it, resolutely holding fast to what it has heard, bearing temptations with fortitude. Rejecting a fleeting life devoted to money-making and enjoyment,[720] it matures and bears fruit, which, in the words of the divine Mark, "sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred" (Mark 4:8).

11. It would be possible to call these categories servitude, work for wages, and sonship.[721] When at first someone approaches God as a guilty man, he really is a slave on account of his former disobedience and defiance.[722] Next, having served as a slave, he desires a recompense as well. Then, after making progress in love, he becomes a son, who is now in possession of virtue and submits as if by nature to the heavenly Father, without compulsion. Let us strive, brethren,

either to lay claim to divine sonship by loving God and refraining from everything else, through continuous prayer and psalmody, and waiting upon Him without distraction, or else to be classed with the hired workers, who successfully achieve self-control in all aspects of the struggle, or else to be numbered among the slaves mourning their former sins. Anyone who does not fall into one of these three groups is not among those being saved.[723]

12. "When he had said these things", it says, "the Lord cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 8:8). This is not because some people do not have ears, but because not everyone has ears for the purpose of hearing the word of salvation. Since, as the saying goes, "It is the mind which sees and the mind which hears",[724] those who have ears to hear are the ones who listen with their minds and with understanding. If it is also the case that "a good understanding have all they that do his commandments" (Ps. 111:10), and the word is recognized through deeds, it is not simply the listener who has ears to hear, but the obedient man who puts what he hears into practice.

13. Before all else, brethren, I beseech you, let us hear with understanding that the Lord did not say that He went out to plough the human fields,[725] or to break up the ground two or three times, dig up the roots of the weeds and smooth out the clods of earth, that is to say, to prepare our hearts for cultivation, but that He went out immediately to sow. Why? Because this preliminary work on our souls prior to sowing ought to be done by us. That is why the Forerunner of the gospel of grace, anticipating this fact, says with a loud voice, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matt. 3:3), and "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). Our preparation and the starting point of repentance is blaming ourselves,[726] confession, and abstention from evil. He also issued a warning to those who had not made themselves ready in this way to bear fruits worthy of repentance (*cf.* Matt. 3:8, Luke 3:8). "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3:10). The sentence God passes on unrepentant sinners is that they be cut off, that once they have been torn away from this present life and the life to come, they be despatched, alas, to unquenchable hell-fire.[727]

14. Let us repent, brethren, and display fruits worthy of repentance. Let each of us abstain from his wicked ways, and let us learn to speak and do what is good. Let us prepare ourselves to receive the heavenly

seed, the word of life. Let us restrain our tongue from evils (What sort of evils? Idle words, abuse, slander),[728] and our lips from uttering oaths, lies and foolish speech.[729] Perhaps these are the evil birds mentioned in the parable, who eat up the good seed and bring it to nought. For every word is like a flying bird, which is why some have referred to them as "having wings".[730] An evil word let loose through the mouth from its nest in the evil treasure of a man's heart (*cf.* Matt. 12:35) robs the soul of its sanctification. The Lord says elsewhere on this subject, "Those things which proceed out of the mouth defile the man" (Matt. 15:18). May no corrupt words come out of your mouth, but only such as are capable of giving edification to those listening.

15. None of you should be so engrossed in the concerns of this life that you are somehow turned into stone by them and cannot open your ears and heart to the dew of the words of the Spirit's teaching. Why is it that when the earth receives rain it is loosened, softened and enriched, but fired clay stays hard and dry and does not dissolve? Is it not because the earth is warmed but not burnt by the sun's rays, and so has its pores open to receive moisture, whereas the earthenware has been burnt through forcible contact with fire, and has its pores tightly closed and sealed deep down, so that it cannot let in even the finest rain? In the same way, when anyone is obsessed by the bodily, earthly cares of everyday life his heart is continuously and severely hardened. Deadened in his understanding even before he returns to the ground, he is incapable of any perception of divine teaching. On the other hand, he who deals with the world as though he had no dealings with it, according to the apostle's advice (1 Cor. 7:31),[731] will be ready to seek heavenly things, listen to them with understanding, and zealously and eagerly act upon them. He will not merely hear, but retain inwardly and put into practice, that he may be called blessed by the Lord for being like the faithful and wise servant (*cf.* Matt. 24:45–46). "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine", says the Lord, "and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man" (Matt. 7:24).

16. If any of you amuses himself with gluttony, excessive drinking, self-indulgent pleasure and drunkenness, he should stop. Otherwise he receives the heavenly seed, the words of instruction, to no avail, and will not be shown to be a fruitful field for God. You all know that when sown fields are too wet they cannot produce crops. So how can a heart sodden with self-indulgence and wine-drinking display heavenly fruit? If anyone has fallen into any sort of impure fornication, let him

turn back, give it up, and cleanse himself through repentance. "Shall he fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return?" (Jer. 8:4). If he wallows in this filth, how can he keep safe within him the holy myrrh which he receives, the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:46), by which I mean the word of salvation. Pearls are not given to pigs (*cf.* Matt. 7:6), and people in their right mind do not mix myrrh with mud. If someone poured out myrrh and mingled it with dung, and put it into a dirty container, he would make the myrrh useless and ruin it. Even though holy myrrh cannot be damaged, anyone who approaches it without abstaining from impurity can be sure of suffering the harm it would have suffered, had it been capable of being spoilt. Whoever is greedy for gain, let him be so no longer, but share what he has with those who have nothing. Unless he does so, he will not escape God's anger, and if he cannot get away from the divine wrath, how can he receive the holy seed? To those who asked John, the Lord's Forerunner, how to flee from the wrath to come, he replied, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise" (Luke 3:11).

17. In a word, let each one of you, through repentance, pull up by the roots the thorns and thistles of sin that you have nurtured in yourself through a life full of passions and pleasures. By so doing, you will cultivate your field and make yourself ready to receive the saving seed. Then once you have received it, you will bring to perfection the fruit of eternal life. Not only ought we to give up our physical desires for the sake of that life, but even, if need be, our soul, for thus we shall follow in the Master's footsteps, be partakers of the glory and kingdom which are in Christ, and live with Him for ever, glorified with Him.

18. Our irrefutable witness is the most excellent of martyrs, the wonderworker and myrrh-gusher Demetrius, before whose icon kings and priests prostrate themselves and rejoice to be present, for he followed in the Lord's footsteps by the way he lived, by his words and his sufferings. Not just anyone will be acceptable to him as a participant in the festival and the ceremony which has already been announced,[732] but only those who have already been initiated into repentance. Given that the saint left behind every material attachment and showed himself in his entirety to be, in Paul's words, "a sweet savour of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:15), to the point that, after his struggle, even his coffin became a fount of fragrant myrrh, how can

he allow anyone to dance around him and sing to him who smells of the stuff of passions and reeks of the unhealed wounds of sin? "Praise is out of place on the lips of sinners", says the Scripture (Ecclus. 15:9). As we celebrate the forefeast, let us also purify ourselves in advance of the appointed feast of the Greatmartyr, which is drawing near. Then, having rejoiced in spirit together with him at the memory of his struggles for Christ's sake, his Christlike life beforehand, and his rewards from Christ afterwards, may we receive this pledge of our hope to dwell in heaven with those who rejoice eternally.

19. May we all attain to this by the prayers of our city's patron saint and martyr for Christ,[733] to the glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FORTY-EIGHT

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LUKE WHICH SAYS, "THERE WAS A CERTAIN RICH MAN, WHICH WAS CLOTHED IN PURPLE"[734]

ABOUT THE RICH AND POOR
AND WHICH RICH MAN IS TO BE SAVED

WE EACH HAVE some of our physical necessities as a result of our own labours, but the rest we receive by exchanging what we have with one another. Clerks, farmers, tailors, weavers, builders, shoemakers, doctors and so on, are not the same. So, as no one on his own has all the necessary things, although everyone inevitably needs them all, currency was invented as a means by which, to improve life,[735] surplus could be disposed of and needs met. The farmer offers his excess produce to people who do not cultivate the land, and when he has received the proceeds he uses them to buy a house, perhaps, or clothes. The shoemaker sells shoes, and on receipt of the appropriate price he provides himself with whatever he needs and lacks. Thus our lives consist of mutual sharing between us all, which is why we have settlements and towns, and man is a social animal.[736]

2. With regard to spiritual matters and the pursuit of virtue, however, this does not apply. Someone who is chaste but not righteous cannot give a righteous man some of his own chastity and acquire righteousness from him. Nor can someone who tells the truth but bears grudges ever make an exchange with someone else to obtain forbearance; nor can he pass on the truthfulness of his speech to another person who lacks veracity. There is no coin or any other such means in these cases

to quantify the exchanges between the two parties and make them of equal value. For that reason, brethren, it is an absolute necessity for each of us to practise every virtue. If anyone fails in one of them he cannot receive it from anyone else, nor escape condemnation and punishment for his shortcoming. As David says, "A brother cannot redeem, shall a stranger redeem him?" (*cf.* Ps. 49:7 Lxx),[737] implying, "nobody".

3. But see how great is Christ the Lord's indescribable love for mankind! That which cannot be received even in exchange for the soul's virtues, which are worth the same and truly precious, He has made easy to buy in another way. Our lowly, earthly, bodily needs, namely, food and drink, clothing, the gold and silver each one possesses: all such things are earth and dust, and nothing is less valuable than that. Yet these worthless things can be the means by which, if, in accordance with the Lord's promise and exhortation, someone offers what he has in excess to those possessed of virtues (because they are completely destitute of physical necessities), he can make up for his deficiency in virtues and escape punishment for being without them through this act of giving. To demonstrate this point, the great Paul, writing to the Corinthians, calls such sharing "fellowship with the saints" (*cf.* 2 Cor. 8:4), and goes on to say, "that your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want" (2 Cor. 8:14). And the Lord says, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations" (Luke 16:9), using the expression, "mammon of unrighteousness" to mean what is over and above our requirements and is not passed on to those in need.

4. Each of us, brethren, must, as I have said, practise every virtue, but if we lack one of them, we have to make up for what is missing by sharing what we have. This is the next best way of fulfilling Christ's word – especially for you who pass your lives in the world – and by it we can secure the salvation of your souls. If, however, we neglect this way as well, it is greatly to be feared that unquenchable fire and everlasting deprivation may take possession of us. To make this clear, the Lord set before us the parable which was read today in church. "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day" (Luke 16:19). All the rich man's attention was on clothing, adornment, extravagant garments, eating, drinking and pleasures. "And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be

fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores" (Luke 16:20–21).

5. Do you observe how the rich man had absolutely nothing in common with Lazarus? He gorged himself daily and his table was full of all sorts of luxurious foods and sauces, whereas Lazarus, who had never eaten his fill, longed to satisfy his hunger even with the plainest fare. He was resplendent, dressed in purple and fine linen, and his excellent physical health served to make him more handsome. By contrast, even the tattered rags Lazarus had round him were soiled and ill-smelling as he had broken out in sores and was bleeding all over. The rich man was seated high up, surrounded by a crowd of attendants, but Lazarus was lying on the ground where he had fallen, by the gate, and had no one even to chase the dogs away.

6. Why does the Lord call the poor man by name, but make the rich man anonymous? It could be said that this poor man's name is written in the heavens, as the Scripture says (*cf.* Luke 10:20), whereas the rich man's name and memory have been blotted out from there and destroyed. The psalmist says of such people, "I will not take up their names into my lips" (Ps. 16:4). Also, since every wealthy person can understand the parable as referring to himself, and can find a motive for repentance by regarding himself as the rich man, he was introduced without a name, so that the account could apply to everyone well-to-do. Not every poor man, however, can think of himself as Lazarus, even if he resembles him, for he must wait humbly for the Lord's verdict. For that reason, the poor man is referred to by name.

7. "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22). With honour beyond what the earth can offer, the poor man is led away like an athlete towards crowns of victory. Having showed us the rich man who is not saved, the Lord immediately presents us with a rich man who is, for such is Abraham. He does not refer to him as rich, however, because his virtue was greater than his wealth. He showed a father's loving disposition to everybody, and was therefore named after his most precious possession, his virtue, for "Abraham" means "father of many" (*cf.* Gen. 17:5).[738] That other rich man, by contrast, had nothing superior to earthly, fleeting riches, and so was named after them. It was not, however, on account of his wealth that he failed to be saved, but because of his love of pleasure, hard-heartedness and lack of hospitality.[739] Abraham, too, was prosperous, but by means of

his love for God, his compassion, and his hospitality to strangers,[740] he was not only saved but became a place for others being saved. So when Lazarus died he was carried by the angels – for, according to Paul, they are ministers "for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14) – and was brought by them to Abraham's bosom, which is the land of the living, the dwelling of those who rejoice for ever, and the realm of everlasting blessings.

8. "The rich man", it says, "also died, and was buried" (Luke 16:22). Perhaps when Lazarus died he did not even have a grave, as there was no one to bury him. No mention at all is made of a grave in his case, but the account then goes on to say that the rich man "was buried". Another reason this is mentioned is because of the ostentation and extravagance which extends even to the tombs of the wealthy, but the graves of such men become, alas, their doorway to hell and the torments of the nethermost parts of the earth. For, it says, the rich man was buried, "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (Luke 16:23). There was a time when the rich man had seen Lazarus cast down in front of the gate, a victim of hunger, writhing on the ground in the dust unable even to move, and he turned a blind eye. Now that he is lying in the depths being tortured and cannot escape his torments, he looks up and sees Lazarus comfortably settled high above, passing his time in profound ease and dwelling in Abraham's bosom, and instead of resolving to ignore him, he thinks he has a right not be overlooked by the man he formerly disregarded. In the place where mercy belonged, he had neither looked for it nor practised it, but there where justice is merciless he seeks mercy to no avail. "He cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:24). He restricted his plea to something extremely trivial, not daring to ask for more as his conscience condemned him.

9. He shouted because of the great distance between them, and he is shown calling Abraham his father so we might learn that he belonged to the race of God-fearing men and not suppose that he was being roasted alive for impiety. For it was because he was unmerciful and pleasure-loving that he was surrounded by the unquenchable flames of fire, although he was related to Abraham by blood. "Have mercy on me", he said, "for I am in torment, and send Lazarus" (Luke 16:24), to whom he

had shown no pity when he was suffering in front of his gate. That is why he does not direct the supplication to Lazarus. He asks for a drop of water, a minute quantity to cool his tongue, and he does not obtain it. Do you see how his punishment pays him back with interest? In the days when Lazarus was poor, he could not eat his fill of the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, but now the rich man is not only deprived of a full stomach and luxuries, but is not even deemed worthy of a tiny drop of water. For, says the parable, "Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented" (Luke 16:25).

10. Abraham feels sorry for the rich man in the flames, and sympathetically calls him "Son". In my opinion, however, he pities him not so much for his punishment as for the evil still at work in him. For he has not yet reached an awareness of his sins, nor does he understand yet that it is just that he should burn. The rich man does not say, "Have mercy on me, for I have kindled this fire and stored up these torments for myself. Instead of the sound of flutes, hand-clapping and disgusting songs, I now hear shouts, wailing and the horrible noise of the fire raging around me. Instead of sweet fragrances I smell the fumes from the fire, instead of abundant food and drink and the pleasures they brought, I now have my tongue utterly parched by this fire and am without even a drop of water. Instead of the flames of impure passion, the fire consumes my whole body." He does not say these things, but merely bewails his torments. How does Abraham reply to him? "Come to your senses. Confess that you were rightly consigned to the fire, remembering that during your lifetime you received all those things which you considered good for you to have, and which you chose to acquire rather than other things which were put within your grasp. The benefits you strove for, which were transitory ones, you obtained, as you preferred them to eternal blessings. On the other hand", says Abraham, "Lazarus experienced those evils which were the opposite of your own good fortune, that is to say, bodily afflictions. So now he is eternally consoled for having temporarily suffered then, whereas you are unceasingly afflicted because in those days you enjoyed yourself for a while and revelled in luxury."

11. Why does Abraham use the word meaning "you received your due" rather than simply "you received"?[741] To show us that anyone who devotes himself in this life to pleasures and self-indulgence, who has plenty of money to spend and makes bad use of his wealth, will

receive no reward even if he manages to do some good. Instead of a reward he has his present abundance and ease. In the same way, someone who is worn down by poverty and illness, and bears it courageously, has his bodily suffering as payment for his faults.

12. "Beside all this", says Abraham, "between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (Luke 16:26). Do you see that even Abraham himself cannot help those condemned to that place even if he wanted to? For, he says, the intervening chasm is impassable, so that those who wish to cross over are unable. "Neither can they pass to us", he says, "that would come from thence." It seems there are other condemned people who are even deeper within the flames, whom Abraham speaks of as those "from thence", who are even more severely tormented by the fire of hell and cannot speak at all. Perhaps they are wealthy men who grew rich not only by failing to share with others but also by extortionate means, which is not something the rich man in the parable is accused of. He is not condemned for being greedy for gain or unjust, but solely for being unmerciful and pleasure-loving. Abraham tells him, "As you preferred a fleeting, comfortable life devoted to enjoyment rather than self-control,[742] it is just that pain, suffering and affliction should now encompass you. You never shared with the poor by giving, nor did you acquire friends through unrighteous mammon, nor did you offer what you had over and above your needs to those in want, but you remained without any fellowship at all with the saints, setting yourself as far apart from them as evil is from virtue. That is why a great gulf has been fixed between us who lived virtuously and you who spent your lives in wickedness, such that no one can ever cross over from one side to the other." These words of his are proof that the damnation of sinners is unending and unchanging, as is the comfort of the righteous.

13. In his foolishness the rich man neither understands, nor stops sinning, nor condemns himself. Still attempting to justify himself, as though nobody had testified to him beforehand about this place of torment, he says, "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment" (Luke 16:27–28). He explains that if he had had someone to give him the evidence beforehand, he would not have done those things for

which he was sentenced to hell. Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them" (Luke 16:29) – for Moses says in his song, as if on God's behalf, "A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell" (Deut. 32:22), and Isaiah, in harmony with the other prophets, says, "The lawless and sinners shall burn together, and none shall quench them" (Isa. 1:31 LXX). When Abraham had said these words, the rich man objected once more, saying, "Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent" (Luke 16:30). What is Abraham's answer to this? "If they hear not Moses and the prophets", he says, "neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31), as though he were actually telling him, "Before you died you took no notice of the words of Moses or the prophets, so even if you had seen someone who had risen from the dead you would not have been convinced by him to give up your dissolute and cruel way of life. That is why you are now rightly engulfed by the fire of hell and suffer unremitting agonies without mercy."

14. That rich man, brethren, who had Moses and the prophets, none of whom had risen from the dead, seems to have had some sort of excuse. We, by contrast, hear, along with them, Him who rose from the dead for our sake, saying, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19, 20), "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matt. 5:42), and "Give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you" (Luke 11:41). If someone eats and drinks with drunkards but is hard hearted to the poor and gives them nothing, "The Lord", says the Scripture, "will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" (Luke 12:46).

15. There is no longer any excuse for you and, since "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15), anyone who has anything extra should share it with those who are without, and by so doing he will be adopted into the inheritance of Abraham, the father of those on the way to salvation. As for the needy, they should emulate the patient endurance of Lazarus,[743] gaining their souls with their patience (*cf.* Luke 21:19), and winning a place for themselves in Abraham's bosom, whence "all pain, sorrow and sighing have fled" (Isa. 35:10; 51:11 LXX, *cf.* Rev. 21:4), and where

godly delight, enjoyment and bliss dwell without end. For this reason, Christ revealed to us, through this parable, what it was like there, so that after we have improved through repentance He might vouchsafe us those eternal pleasures, and deliver us from the torments in store for sinners. But if we do not grow better by means of repenting, there is a fearful risk that we may increase the torments inflicted on us. "That servant", it says, "which knew his lord's will, but did not do it, shall be beaten with many stripes" (*cf.* Luke 12:47).

16. Having addressed us in these and similar words and given us His evidence, He who suffered, was buried and rose from the dead for our sake then ascended into heaven. He appointed a countless host of witnesses to His coming and to the truth of His pronouncements. Among those, if anyone stands out conspicuously as more excellent than most, it is the supremely great Demetrius, whom our Church sets before us now as the cause for our celebration,[744] and who not only declared his testimony in words, but resisted the unbelievers to the point of shedding his blood. He showed his body to be an indestructible pillar which in its own right traces out for us the Saviour's sufferings and presents them before our eyes, and by the myrrh and miracles that stream from this body of his he preaches both the resurrection of Him who was crucified and the power of the risen Lord. For how could the saint who imitated His passion and died for Him be counted worthy of such glory unless He who rose "reigneth as Lord", according to the Psalter, and "is clothed with majesty and hath girded himself with almighty power" (*cf.* Ps. 93:1), as the only-begotten Son of the Father.

17. With our eyes on the martyr who bore witness to the truth, let us obey the Truth Himself by living in a way pleasing to God. Keeping the feast with our souls as well as our bodies, let us approach Demetrius, the finest of noble saints, that strengthened by him in soul, body, mind and senses, we may think on the blessedness stored up in heaven for those who live godly lives here, and long for it and seek after it to the end through our actions.

18. May we all attain to this by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory, power, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FORTY-NINE

ON THE GREATMARTYR AMONG THE SAINTS DEMETRIUS THE WONDERWORKER AND MYRRHSTREAMER[745]

"HOW PRECIOUS are thy friends unto me, O God! How great are their leaders", says David, the most inspired singer of all time (Ps. 139:17 Lxx). The leaders of the company of the apostles are the chief apostles; of the list of the prophets, those referred to as having seen God;[746] of the whole assembly of sacred teachers and holy men, those called great in accordance with the promise of the Saviour of all (Matt. 5:19); and of Christ's martyrs, obviously the Greatmartyrs. Clearly conspicuous among these, and rising above most of them in his excellence, is the one we celebrate and honour especially today, a native Thessalonian, fellow citizen, and the guardian of our city,[747] noble wonder of the world and adornment of the Church, Demetrius the Wonderworker and Myrrhstreamer, who was great in all respects. For among martyrs he is as a great luminary among stars, holding forth the word of eternal life (Phil. 2:16), encompassed more especially by the light of the rays of the divine dawn, and outshining most of the others. Has he not also been endowed with the grace of prophecy? If, then, he has been adorned with prophetic power, is he deemed unworthy of the ministry and office of apostle and teacher? And if he was indeed honoured with these, does he lack the asceticism of holy men, or their lifelong radiance? Certainly not. Following some, equalling others, the leader of some, surpassing others to a considerable degree, he alone, or with a very few, accomplished everything. He alone contains within himself the gifts of them all as, with God's help, our homily will go on to demonstrate, and he alone is worthy to enjoy all at once the praises due to them all.

2. We ourselves cannot measure up to any individual within any class of saints, never mind to a whole company or category of them, so what words shall we say in an address such as this concerning a man who brought the gifts of all the saints together into one holy life according to God, and whose worth is altogether beyond our grasp? Love, however, moves me to say what I can, the occasion calls for appropriate words, and obligation forces me not to be remiss in speaking in honour of the martyr's inexpressible greatness. From beginning to end he eagerly strove, as far as human nature permitted, to demonstrate a way of life defying description, in keeping with the indescribable rewards promised by God.

3. Almost from childhood he was all these things at once: a solid, immovable pillar of goodness, a breathing, moving image of every virtue; the shrine of divine and human graces, representing them all; a living book telling of glory and leading us to better things. He was an unprecedented and fortunate combination of everything noble, eager for anything good to the common benefit of all. To use the words of Scripture, being a righteous man, he flourishes like the palm tree (*cf.* Ps. 92:12), he is "a green olive tree in the house of God" (Ps. 52:8), and "a tree planted by the rivers of water" of the Spirit (Ps. 1:3), except that, according to the psalmist, that tree "bringeth forth his fruit in his season", whereas for him it was, and is, always the season of blossoming and bearing fruit at the same time. Just as, according to Scripture, the leaves of that tree never wither, so his blossom and fruit, as well as his leaves, are unfailingly bestowed on those who approach with faith.

4. In consequence of the fact that he brought forth leaves, blossom and fruit together and, as Solomon said, "In a short time he came to the perfection of a full span of years" (*cf.* Wisd. 4:13), Demetrius is that rod of Aaron (Num. 17:8), a fine flourishing spring of piety, a much-loved flower, a wonderful and divine variety of fruit. Or rather, he is the rod and divine sceptre of Christ, the eternal High Priest and, if you like, the ever-green, godly staff of Christ whom Aaron foreshadowed. Whereas Aaron prefigured Christ, his rod, which simultaneously blossomed, produced fruit and ripened it to perfection by divine means, symbolized Demetrius, who fulfilled the rôle of Christ's good sceptre in every respect. But Demetrius was more excellent than Aaron's rod,

as someone who later acquired every virtue must necessarily be far more noble and magnificent in his character, deeds and miracles than a mere symbol. Because he pours out, so to speak, an undiminishing, never-ceasing stream of graces on those who draw near, he is like a light-bearing tree, which freely gives rays of light instead of fruit, and offers those who approach their fill of everything most beautiful and divine, while retaining its own fullness, like a sun radiating all kinds of blessings, an ever-flowing fount of graces, an inexhaustible ocean of wonders, or an ineffable, unfathomable abyss of visible and invisible benefits.

5. To attempt to praise someone so great by referring to his external circumstances: to say that this city which bore him is the crowning glory of Thessaly,[748] whose very name refers to its power,[749] or to mention the renown of his forefathers or his parents' high reputation, even though these factors increase our admiration for him, would still be superfluous. For it is rather Demetrius, who is a great source of pride to his town and his forebears. How can they be a credit to him, when he himself beautifies the whole world and even the heavenly order? What, though, does he have to adorn him? Unshakable faith, grace freely bestowed, the inalienable divine wealth of godly virtues, which are stored up for him now in heaven, swelling the treasures there of beautiful things. In fact, as soon as he was born of human parents, while still in this life Demetrius reached heaven from earth, being a great addition to the sum of eternal blessings, and a source of beauty for the whole world and for heaven.

6. Foreseeing this, David pronounced him blessed and extolled him, saying, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners" (Ps. 1:1). He never accepted an impious thought into his mind, nor embarked on any action unpleasing to God. Preserving undefiled the grace he received through baptism in Christ, his will was attuned to the law of the Lord. He was, as it were, God's book, a writing-tablet or slate engraven by God, or a panel inscribed by God's finger and set before all for the common good. According to Isaiah, "Before he knew evil, he chose the good" (Isa. 7:15 LXX), and in the very flower of his youth he embraced virginity. He was wholly given over to the acquisition of this virtue, doing everything necessary in order to be virginal in both body and soul, that he might become a citizen of heaven, and approach the bodiless powers on equal terms while still in his body. All the other virtues helped him in this struggle, especially his zeal for wisdom. As

a result, having reached perfection in understanding and purity, while still young he soon had that grey hair which draws esteem. "If men have understanding", according to Solomon, "they have grey hairs enough, and an unspotted life is the true ripeness of age" (Wisd. 4:9).

7. He was a gentle young man, very beautiful to behold, not just with regard to the outward, visible man, but much more according to his inner, invisible self. When God, who sees into men's hearts, saw him, He was so taken by his unseen, spiritual beauty that He graciously willed to dwell in him, to become one spirit with him, and thus to make him holy in all respects. Whereas He found David as a man (*cf.* Ps. 89:20), He found Demetrius before he was eligible for manhood, still just a boy. He found him to be at heart a workman who need not be ashamed (2 Tim. 2:15), and who fulfilled His commandments. He found him a chosen vessel like Paul, to bear His name before nations and kings (Acts 9:15). He found him "a flawless mirror" (Wisd. 7:26), able to receive and reflect heavenly beauty beyond description. I also perceive these words referring in a mysterious way to him: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles" (Matt. 12:18, *cf.* Isa. 42:1). He shall transform some of them, turning unworthy men into worthy, that he might be "as my mouth" (Jer. 15:19). Others he shall accuse and put to shame, showing them to be "fitted for destruction" (Rom. 9:22). Although these things are written about Christ, they will be freely given by Him to those who live exactly as He did.

8. From then on, this wise, virginal and holy Demetrius, noble and undefiled in every respect, radiant by nature, through his own efforts and by grace, became both a teacher and an apostle. What was said of Job from the land of Uz could refer to Demetrius at that time, that "there was none like him in the earth" (Job 1:8). In fact, even Job himself, of whom it is written that there was none like him among men (Job 2:3 Lxx), did not resemble Demetrius, who was holy in every way.

9. Job, in an earlier time, had certainly been blameless, righteous and God-fearing, just as Demetrius was later shown to be. But Job could not be praised for virginity, whereas virginity marked out Demetrius as victoriously crowned from his youth, superior to human nature, and a match for the angels who surround God. And whereas Job's body was

severely wounded in his fight against evil (Job 2:8, 13),[750] Demetrius struggled with evil to the point of shedding his last drop of blood.

10. There is no evidence that Job was skilled with words, whereas for Demetrius this skill, combined with the Spirit's grace, was a weapon, an insuperable defence, a builder's tool, a farmer's spade and plough, a fisherman's net, and so on. At times he cultivated the Lord's vineyard, casting heavenly seed upon the earth, or writing the words of eternal life "not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart" (2 Cor. 3:3), such hearts as were worthy of such an inscription. In the net of his words he caught Thessalonica, Attica, Achaea, or rather, the whole area he now embraces with his myrrh, his miracles and the universal abundance of his grace. Even then the world marvelled at Demetrius' divine words, and he was, as Paul says, "a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life" (2 Cor. 2:15–16). I cannot say, however, that the myrrh and miracles bestowed by God on the Greatmartyr's relics are sufficient reward for this fragrance. For, great and wonderful as these present gifts are, how can they be compared with the rewards already given to him by God in heaven, and those still in store? As Paul tells us, "by reason of the glory that excelleth, even that which was made glorious had no glory" (2 Cor. 3:10). The myrrh and miracles are, however, an obvious sign to everyone that while still alive Demetrius was the sweet savour of Christ and the fragrance of life for those who chose to listen.

11. As he cultivated men's souls in this way, or drew them into his net, in accordance with Christ's promise to Peter (Luke 5:10), his words were his means of accomplishing this husbandry and this saving catch. At other times, he constructed a temple for God out of living, truly precious stones (*cf.* 1 Pet. 2:5), using fitting words as his tool. When he made war on Christ's opponents, particularly those visible enemies of God in whom His invisible enemies were at work, words were all-important to him, bestowed, inspired, strengthened, put in order and transformed by the divine Spirit to be effective. As the Scripture says of the first martyr in the struggle, nobody was "able to resist the wisdom and the spirit" with which Demetrius spoke (*cf.* Acts 6:10).

12. I also consider that the military uniform, the ring on his finger and the marks of high rank, which the martyr put on when he received his commission from the Emperor at that time,[751] were symbols of the

office of teacher and leader mysteriously bestowed on the martyr by the true Emperor. Because of this, God's divine grace worked many miracles later through these tokens. It was obviously necessary for the original deceiver to be cleverly deceived, lest he should contrive an early death for the martyr, and he should be finally harvested before the fruit for the eternal storehouse had appeared, and as a result not bear much fruit. But when the master of envy saw the outcome of these symbols, unable to endure any longer, he incited the servants of error against the enemy of delusion, and, having seized the persecutor of deception, they led him before the "Emperor of treachery", that is to say, Maximian. In this way, Demetrius was stripped to run the martyr's race, he who had been full of indescribable graces since childhood, wise and righteous in every respect, a saint, apostle and virgin, completely pure and, without exaggeration, Christ's beloved disciple, child or best and closest friend. In fact, he was all these at once, because he attained to all the thoughts, words and deeds which are dear to God.

13. I am aware that you all wish to know the way in which he was arrested, and where and how he was sought and seized by the executioners. In the Church of the ever-virgin Mother of God[752] there is an underground portico which is called the Refuge.[753] By ancient custom they start the annual festival of the Greatmartyr from there, and come up here along the road[754] singing hymns in his honour, until they reach this place and complete the celebration. When impiety held sway, because religious worship could not be held openly, the martyr loved to frequent that underground area. There he shared heavenly teaching with those present, and fearlessly conducted Christian instruction and services for those who took shelter with him, the truly calm haven of godliness, from godlessness, as if from the stormy waves. In those days the holy martyr was a refuge for all who wanted to be pious, and so the place itself was called the Refuge.

14. When those appointed by Maximian Herculius[755] to track down the advocates of godliness found out about this, they stood by while the martyr was teaching the people there. Growing even more frenzied as they saw the assembled crowd attending to Demetrius' words, as if to God's voice, they moved against him as the leader and scattered the people. Once they had arrested him they led him along this boulevard and brought him to Maximian who was passing his time hereabouts, watching the murderous acts of Lyaeus[756] with immense pleasure. Not wanting to be torn away from this enjoyment,

he gave orders for the saint to be shut away in this place, where he was also to suffer his martyrdom. It is appropriate that we represent these events every year by starting the festive procession there and finishing it here,[757] for at that time the martyr himself was dragged to the slaughter by this route for Christ's sake, being bidden to the greatest festival and delight.

15. The devil, the author of evil, strove to remove Demetrius as quickly as possible from among men. He could not bear him still to be on earth at all, to be seen by people, speak to them and be heard. It was God's will, however, to show that Demetrius, soon to be His Greatmartyr, in addition to everything else, was also a prophet, and that he not only possessed the grace to be a martyr, but could also bestow that grace on others, because it was so utterly united with him in a way defying nature, that he had become a superhuman fount of grace. As there is no time to speak at length, what need I say? You know about the delay ordered by the tyrant, about Demetrius' imprisonment, and also about Nestor,[758] the prophecy Demetrius made to him, his consequent victory against Lyaeus, and his martyrdom.

16. The supremely wicked serpent realized that the tyrant's postponement was becoming protracted, and he could no longer tolerate seeing Demetrius, who was already great even before the perfection of martyrdom, alive on earth. He therefore disguised himself as a scorpion and attacked the martyr, not however to beguile or lure him, as he had once deceived the woman of that first couple, our forebears, by means of the serpent, and then enticed the man through her. He knew by experience that Demetrius could not be deceived, that he was extremely brave and well practised in discerning what was for the best. So he did not attack him through the scorpion in order to deceive him, but to deal him a mortal blow, kill him quickly and rid himself of such a virtuous and powerful opponent. But the grace and power dwelling in Demetrius outstripped the devil's speed and diligence. By entreating God and making the sign of the Cross, the martyr used his hand to kill the instrument of death, and put the disguised devil to shame, destroying his work. In this manner he showed that, unless he had voluntarily submitted to affliction, he would not have suffered at all, as he was guarded and strengthened by Christ's grace and His might.[759] Of his own accord, he was handed over, imprisoned, seized by the executioners' hands, and suffered as

a wrongdoer by the action of wrongdoers, imitating the Lord who suffered for our sake.

17. So when the murderous spear-bearers arrived, sent by the tyrant, he received the last blow, with open arms, into his bosom, where he was to be mortally wounded. Or, more precisely, he accepted the many blows, the piercing points of the lances, which went everywhere, through his inward parts, his bones, his flesh, and both his sides, one from the outside and one from within. He doubled, or rather multiplied, the passion of the Saviour's side, filling up, as Paul says, what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ (Col. 1:24). He so desired to be killed and to shed his blood for Christ's glory, over and over again without ceasing if it were possible, that he received a fount of myrrh in his body from the one who knew his all-surpassing and extraordinary love for Him. Thus, when there was no more blood, this myrrh would thenceforth and for ever pour from his body instead of blood to the glory of Christ, whom Demetrius not only glorified during his lifetime, through his death and afterwards, but also continues to glorify,[760] and by whom he in turn has been glorified, is glorified and will be glorified, in a divine way, both on earth and in heaven.

18. It occurs to me now to say of him what the divine Paul says of Christ. For the great Demetrius, too, commends his love towards us, in that, while we were yet ungodly, "in due time he died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6, 8), by the Lord's grace, of course, and in imitation of Him. Through his death this whole city was reconciled with God. For where are all those ungodly people, among whom were probably many of our ancestors? Where is the fear felt by pious Christians, which led to the desire for hiding-places? Where are those who raved against the faithful with a more than bestial cruelty? All these horrors have disappeared, and everything beneficial has come about, because Demetrius bore the brunt of the battle for our faith. Splendid, spacious churches, the very sight of which draws everyone towards them, stand above those hiding-places. Kings adorned with piety even more than with kingship, are present among us, and join us in applauding and praising the martyr's valiant deeds. All of us who inhabit this city publicly declare our faith, boasting of the martyrdom of the great Demetrius. For he has poured forth his love not just upon our hearts, but also upon our bodies, by means of the myrrh which he sends forth from his body for our good health. The fragrance of that myrrh expelled impiety from every part of the city, and made it a city of God, or another paradise, if

not something even better: a city watered and gladdened by a river not of water but of myrrh. Myrrh, moreover, in which and from which is the grace of healing, through the Spirit, and the working of miracles. We can therefore address to the great Demetrius the words written in the Song of Songs about the soul wedded to God in incorruption: "The scent of thy garments is above all spices" (S. of S. 4:10 LXX).

19. The garment of the martyr's soul can be understood as his body, of which, again according to the Song, "the cheeks are like vessels of myrrh", and the fingers "like lilies dripping fragrance" (*cf.* S. of S. 5:13, 5 LXX). As for his pierced side, having been, as it were, opened up by the spears, it can no longer be like a vessel containing myrrh nor like lilies from which fragrant drops escape, but yields an ever-flowing, inexhaustible fountain. Instead of saying with the psalmist, "The river of God is full of water" (Ps. 65:9), we must say that God's spring, the martyr's body, is full of myrrh, miracles and healings, and, most amazing of all, although it pours forth torrents, it remains full. It is as though the holy martyr's soul uttered the same words when it ascended out of his body to God as that soul wedded to God in the Song, namely: "Away, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that my spices may flow out" (S. of S. 4:16).

20. Thus he expelled and dispersed the winter of godlessness, which in those days had been afflicting the city, with the breath of the spiritual north wind, and restored to us the spiritual warmth of piety, bestowed by the fair breath of that south wind, which blows behind the stern of those who choose to sail towards the dawn of the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2). From that garden of virtues and graces, which is his martyred body, Demetrius granted that myrrh and healing should flow, making as many springs as the wounds made by the spearmen in his flesh. The mouths of the wolves, into whose midst, according to the gospel, the Lord had sent His disciple Demetrius (Matt. 10:16, Luke 10:3), opened up fountains where they bit, which bring great joy and many welcome benefits to Christ's flock, whereas the wolves have gradually all been changed into lambs. The gates of hell, the mouths of those tyrants who delivered those deadly sentences, have not only failed to prevail against Christ's Church (Matt. 16:18), even though it was exposed to their bites, but procured glory on earth for those who suffered, as well as heavenly and eternal glory.

21. Would you also like to know what is meant by the Lord's commandment in today's Gospel reading to those sent by Him into

the midst of wolves: "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16)? The snake protects itself but destroys others, having the instinct and capability for both defence and attack. The dove, by contrast, is innocent and not on its guard. The Lord, therefore, orders His disciples to be neither aggressive like snakes, nor unguarded like doves, but wisely to join caution with prudent innocence, and so to be in a position to defend their piety and virtue, while being guileless towards those who mistreat them, to the point of praying for them.[761] In this way, a life-giving remedy will come into being, even for those slain by the spiritual serpent. Physicians take snake flesh, cleanse it of venom, mix it with certain foodstuffs, and use it to cure victims of snakebites. By the same token, anyone who, in time of trial, combines the serpent's wariness and defensiveness with the dove's innocence, not only puts himself out of reach of the snake's harm, that is to say, the devil's deception, but also heals those who have been bitten by snakes – those who have been deluded – by destroying the snake's evil, namely, sin and impiety.

22. The martyr is at hand, the Great Martyr Demetrius. After having finished his course, kept the faith (*cf.* 2 Tim. 4:7), and resisted to the point of shedding his blood (*cf.* Heb. 12:4) to uphold godliness, he was so far from taking revenge on those who had mistreated him, that by praying to God for them he stopped the wickedness of some of them, whereas others he transformed, with the result that nothing of that ungodliness remains in this city. Instead, the city within which and on account of which the divine martyr underwent violent death, stands firm and continues to exist, through his protection in all sorts of circumstances, his many and varied kindnesses, and his unceasing supplication to God.

23. To demonstrate this fact, rather than as a reward to him – for who can repay him for all that he has done for us? – we make much of his festival, seeking to be deemed worthy of his intercessions to God, and of the eternal celebrations of the citizens of heaven. May we all attain to this, by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory, power, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the all-holy Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FIFTY

On the Gospel for the Sixth Sunday of Luke Which says "When Jesus Went Forth to Land, There Met Him Out of the City a Certain Man, Which Had Devils Long Time"[762]

"HE THAT IS OF GOD heareth God's words", says the Lord (John 8:47), meaning that such a man obeys God's commandments, puts His words into practice, and lives and acts according to Christ's example, doing the will of the heavenly Father and becoming an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Anyone who disobeys God, however, and commits sin, persisting in it without repenting, is the slave of sin and belongs not to God but to the evil one. Through choosing evil he has changed the nature he received from God and made himself like the father of perdition. That is why the Lord said to the Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44).

2. Men of this kind, even though they escape the notice of most people, are more wretched than those who are obviously possessed by demons. The possessed lacerate their own bodies and sometimes inflict physical harm on others who happen to meet them, but those who have come to resemble the most evil enemy through their wicked desires and deeds ruin their own souls and the souls of those who encounter them without being on their guard. When demoniacs die, they cast off the demons' influence along with their body, but unrepentant sinners have an everlasting affliction, which cannot be

thrown off. We all feel pity at the sight of someone whose body is clearly tormented by a demon. To murderers, however, misers, people who are arrogant, shameless and rebellious, or anything of that sort, we not only show no mercy, but we hate them. This is because the man in the demon's power falls into evil passions against his will, whereas the lover of sin embraces evil of his own free will, often concealing just how destructive and malignant his disease is.

3. As most people are unable to comprehend the devil's maniacal fury against us from his attacks on our souls and the assistance he lends us when we sin, God permitted that there should be some people physically under the control of demons, that we might all learn from them how terrible is the affliction of a soul which intends to make itself the devil's dwelling through evil deeds. When, on account of the incomparable vastness of His love for mankind, the only-begotten Son of God bowed the heavens and came down to earth (*cf.* Ps. 144:5), to set us free from the devil's tyranny over our souls, He also cast out demons from those whose bodies were obviously possessed, and through this liberation and healing carried out openly, He gave proof and confirmation of the release and cure effected secretly in their souls. When He granted healing to the soul of the paralysed man, not only did He not receive any praise from those who saw what happened with their own eyes, but He was also blasphemed.[763] So He healed the man's physical paralysis as well, that they might know, as He said to those present, "that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (Matt. 9:2–6).

4. The Lord makes a special point of expelling demons from those possessed, so that we might be aware that He is the one who can drive them out of our souls and grant us eternal freedom. "And when he came out to land", according to the Gospel passage we read today, "there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs" (Luke 8:27). It says that He "came out" rather than simply "came" to the land,[764] to emphasize that He arrived there after going over the lake, and during the crossing He had calmed the storm of wind, and rebuked the sea to calm it (Luke 8:23–24). On setting out in the boat from Galilee with His disciples He said to them, as the evangelist tells us earlier, "Let us go over unto the other side" (Luke 8:22). It is clear from this that with foresight and mercy He came of His own accord to help the man who had been so terribly harassed by demons for so

long. Luke says that there was one man who had many demons. Mark, too, says there was one man, but "with an unclean spirit" (Mark 5:2), whereas Matthew relates that there were two men together, both afflicted by many demons (Matt. 8:28).

5. Luke and Mark explain why some evangelists say there was one possessed man and one demon, and others that there were more than one of each. When the demon referred to by Mark as an unclean spirit was subsequently questioned by the Lord, he answered, "My name is Legion: for we are many" (Mark 5:9). A legion is a large group or body of angels or men who fight and move around together, having one action and purpose in view, and the same motivation. Those demoniacs, acting under the control of this sort of troop and borne along by it, were together in the tombs and hills, and were ceaselessly driven around in each other's company. Because of this, both they and the evil spirits harassing them are sometimes referred to in the singular and sometimes in the plural.

6. The legion of evil spirits did not simply meet Jesus through that man, but "fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not. For", it says, "he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man" (Luke 8:28–29). Having purposely landed for mercy's sake on that shore where this man possessed by demons lived, the Lord ordered the legion of demons to come out of him without, however, giving any command as to where they should go. That thoroughly disgusting swarm of evil spirits was seized with dismay, and they feared lest they were to be handed over now by the Lord to the Judgment to come, the hell-fire prepared for them (Matt. 25:41), which will render them completely unable to move, having destroyed their power of action. They were compelled, therefore, to approach the Lord, fall down before Him, and use most humble and truthful words to address Him, testifying that He was the Son of the Most High, while at the same time having the wicked idea that they could change the mind of the Lord of all by means of this testimony, as though it were flattery.

7. The Lord tolerated the witness they bore Him for the instruction of the men in the boat. For when they had seen those miracles on the lake, they had said to one another in amazement, "What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him?" (Luke 8:25). Now they learned who He was: the Son of God most high. Even the devil always works in co-operation

with God's will, without wishing or intending to do so, which is why one of the God-bearing Fathers said that "evil assists good, while intending what is bad".[706] Wishing to show those present that this terrible demon was not just one but a large number of them, He asked him, "What is thy name?" (Luke 8:30), "And he answered, My name is Legion: for we are many demons" (*cf.* Mark 5:9, Luke 8:30). Some say that a legion is a body of soldiers six thousand strong.

8. "And they besought him", it says, "that he would not command them to go out into the deep" (Luke 8:31). Do you see that it is fear, as we mentioned earlier, that made them draw near, fall down before Him and adopt truthful and humble gestures and words? Notice, also, the almighty authority of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, because the demon involuntarily acknowledges Him to be Lord even of the abyss. Who oversees the bottomless depths? Obviously the Lord who sits on high, who encompasses and directs all things.

9. Observe that the horde of demons were unable to stay anywhere, even with His permission and consent.[707] When they were ordered by the Lord to depart, without being told where to go, they were under great pressure, and took refuge in the pigs feeding on the hillside, in order to escape by means of them. But even though they had no power over them, they were even more powerless over men or any other kind of creature. "There was there", it says, "an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked" (Luke 8:32–33). Seeking a pretext to flee, and intent upon evildoing, the demons asked for leave to enter the pigs, because they had been expelled from the men by the Saviour, and understood that they had been driven out, not just from one or two individuals, but, through this one person, from every human being. The Lord gave His permission so that we might learn from what happened to the pigs that the demons would not have refrained from delivering the man up to complete destruction, had they not previously been invisibly restrained by the Lord's power.

10. "When", it says, "they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country" (Luke 8:34). Turn your thoughts now to the prodigal son in the Gospel, who was saved by fleeing from pigs, and you will realize, who those swineherds

were, or rather, to whom we can liken them. The way pigs live, because it is so dirty, symbolizes every wicked passion, and above all it is those who walk about with robes soiled by the flesh who are pigs. Their leaders, swineherds, as it were, are those among them who outdo the rest in self-indulgence, and make provision for their flesh and their appetite, to fulfil their lusts (*cf.* Rom. 13:14).

11. Time and, as you see, the restlessness of the crowd, do not allow us to go on to explain in detail what is meant by the nakedness of the soul which comes about as a result of sin, as demostrated by the man possessed by demons, and why he spent his time in the mountains – because it states that he "ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs" (Luke 8:27) – and what these chains, fetters and bands were, which he broke when he was driven away (Luke 8:29).

12. But let us too, we who are monks,[767] flee from spending our time with the pigs in the fields and keeping company with them. As Solomon says, "Bad company ruins good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33),[768] and it is usually the case that each person either resembles his companions or becomes like them. What good does it do us to take flight from the world once and for all and find refuge in houses of prayer consecrated to God, but then to leave them daily and become involved in the world again? Tell me how, if you love frequenting the town squares, you will avoid the incentives to passions which bring about the death of the soul, separating a man from God? This death comes upon us through our senses, as if through windows within us, and it was by these means that our ancestors fell from immortality.

13. Let all of us take flight. Some of us must flee from positions of authority among evil men, even though we may seem superior to many of them by birth and reputation, in physical strength and material wealth. Others of us have to avoid any resemblance to pigs, by setting our minds on that future lake of unquenchable fire into which, alas, will fall all who comply with the demons' approaches without repenting, and by beholding the gulf into which those who live like swine to the end will be cast down when they die. Let us escape without a backward glance (*cf.* Luke 9:62) from the foul-smelling life of sin, and let us rightly and justly approach the fount of myrrh, which God has granted to flow for us, as you see, through the shrine from the coffin of our fellow citizen, the martyr for Christ.[769] Then, sanctified and strengthened by using this holy myrrh, let us proclaim its divine strength and effectiveness in the countryside and the towns,

wherever we may be. I am not saying we should preach with our voice and in words (for is there anyone who has not heard tell of the stream of miracles from this source?), but through the transformation of our lives for the better, that all who see us may say, "This is the change wrought by the right hand of the Most High" (Ps. 77:10 LXX), in which the great Demetrius' likeness can be seen, and through which those nearby are changed to become more holy, in order that he may have as his fellow citizens also in heaven those so fortunate as to have shared his dwelling-place on earth.

14. May this come to pass by his intercessions, and may we all attain to the promised heavenly mansions, to dwell in them with the saints, by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belongs glory unto the ages. Amen.

HOMILY FIFTY-ONE

CONSTANT CONVERSE WITH GOD IN PRAYER AND PSALMODY IS THE FOUNDATION AND ASSURANCE OF EVERYTHING GOOD DRIVING AWAY EVERY EVIL AND MISFORTUNE AND REDEEMING US FROM IT[770]

WHEN DAVID CONSIDERED and reckoned up the multitude and greatness of God's gifts to us, and the fact that nobody has anything worthy to give Him in exchange, he said, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all that he hath rendered unto me?" (Ps. 116:12 LXX). It is clear, however, to anyone who is at all attentive, that the prophet is not calling to mind those gifts of God to us which were in existence before we were, but only those which came later. Which gifts are those which existed before man, which were given to him by God before he was made? Heaven, earth, this whole visible world, and everything above the earth was produced for our sake. For all these things, which existed prior to any human being, were brought from non-being for our sake and made ready in advance for love of mankind.[771] They are immediately bestowed by God on every person born into the world for his sustenance and enjoyment, but they are not rendered to him in exchange for anything, nor as a reward, but are truly a gift from God, the great and bountiful Creator, who gives completely freely. "For what hast thou", asks Paul, "that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7). "Or who hath first given to God" – especially as he was not yet born – "and it shall be recompensed to him again?" (Rom. 11:35). The prophet, therefore, leaving to one side the immense gifts of this type, namely, the world, all it contains and everything above it – for nothing can be rendered in exchange for these – and only looking at God's later gifts to us, is nonetheless at a loss as to what can be offered in return.

2. But what are those subsequent gifts which the prophet says God has rendered to us? When man realizes who it was that brought him into being and made everything for his sake, and gives glory to God and reaches up towards Him through faith and works, it is as though he were giving something back to God or offering something in exchange.[772] And since God, as the ever-flowing and inexhaustible fount of grace-filled gifts, glorifies men many times over in return for glorifying Him, and increases His original bounties towards those who receive them with appropriate gratitude, this divine action is a recompense,[773] which is accepted by its recipients with due thanksgiving in word and deed, and then given back again to the giver. This exchange between the two sides takes place many times and multiplies the benefits rendered by God to those well-pleasing to Him, and then rendered back to Him by them.[774] For instance, when Abraham came to an understanding of the Creator by means of the creation, and gave God honour and glory, he was counted worthy to hear God's voice pronouncing the promise: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:1–3).

3. That voice and the promise it brought were granted by God to Abraham for the glory which Abraham had rendered to God. Abraham in turn repaid God by acting in obedience to Him, and as a result he heard Him saying again: "Find favour before me, and be thou perfect. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed, and I will make thee exceeding fruitful" (Gen. 17:1, 6–7 LXX). What brief account can summarize their subsequent mutual exchanges: all Abraham's offerings to God through faith, words and deeds, and God's manifestations, promises and bounties to Abraham. These included the great and miraculous favours as well as the law, the prophets, the royal line, and Christ Himself, the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15, *cf.* Rev. 17:14; 19:16, 2 Macc. 13:4). Anyone who looks

carefully will discover that something very similar happened, not just to Abraham, but to each one of those who pleased God, though it might be accomplished differently, according to what was appropriate to the circumstances and way of life of those who found favour.

4. When David, having reflected on the matter, saw everything he had received, and everything given to those who went before him – for those gifts, too, were for his sake – he understood that the benefits bestowed by God are immeasurable and that, whereas these really are bounties from God for us, the things men offer to God are nothing in comparison. Then it was that he cried out, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all that he hath rendered unto me?" (Ps. 116:12 LXX). As he could find nothing to offer to God except his acknowledgment of the favours he had already received and his request for those still to come, he went on to say, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. 116:13). He is not rendering anything in return, rather he is taking, asking to receive, but giving nothing. Someone who has received a gift from a king and made obeisance, then requests a further gift, has not given anything in exchange for what he was given. The cup of salvation refers to the drink-offerings made in gratitude to God for having been preserved. As a prophet, however, and speaking in the Spirit, he foresees what is to come. Making his own what belongs to grace, and regarding what is ours as his, since he is our forefather according to faith, he says, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. 116:13), showing forth beforehand our sacred participation and communion in the sacramental Cup, our boldness towards God in this respect, and our salvation by this means.

5. If we have nothing to render to God for His benefits to us except to call upon Him once again, what reparation will we find to offer when we sin against Him and put ourselves in the wrong? None at all. Any good we may do, we were obliged to do before we sinned, and even then we were incapable of repaying out debt. So the only way we have to remedy our wrongdoings is to glorify God's incomparable forbearance towards us and to invoke His divine mercies.

6. But why am I telling you this now? Because, although we have nothing to offer God, either for all the good we have experienced from Him or in respect of our offences against Him, we are also negligent about glorifying Him and making supplication. I observe that the church has a full congregation now, and I am filled with joy,

but I recall the last few weeks. It was the season of the grape harvest – I am speaking to you about this now, not to reproach you but to help you to understand. It was the grape harvest, and the Church of God suffered a serious lack of worshippers and people to offer hymns and earnest entreaties to God. How many people have a full night's sleep during that period, even on Sunday, which is called the Lord's Day because on it we abstain from self-indulgence and stop our daily work, being free from all the concerns of daily life in order to persevere in intercession and praise to God? And yet, where do our annual crops of fruit come from? Are they not from God?

7. When the season for enjoying and gathering in the fruit comes round, we ought to glorify God even more. We, however, acting wrongly and unjustly, cut down on His praises and neglect them at that time. But why mention this now? There are many who, both before and after the harvest, do not even wake up for the Sunday morning services of praise. Yet it is also the case that some among those gathered here pay more heed to their conversations between themselves than to the prayers and doxologies. The majority are more interested in the goods on sale than in the readings, and in buying and selling than in the teaching of the divinely inspired Scriptures. The noble building thus becomes a shop, and the house of prayer, that is to say, the house of God, is turned into a "house of merchandise" (John 2:16). People buzz around us, as you see, like drones, not listening themselves, and preventing those who want to listen from doing so.

8. What makes them like this? The fact that they consider they have nothing to gain from entreaties and praises to God, or from listening to the divine Scriptures and their counsel. Some feel that they are doing nothing – though it would not be fair to level this accusation at them all. Certain of them are of the opinion that they are standing idle and consider that any time spent persevering in glorifying God and making supplications is wasted. Proof that they think they are unoccupied at that time is the fact that they excuse themselves when any seemingly urgent work comes along: harvesting, perhaps, picking grapes, or anything else which appears to us to be necessary.

9. I cannot begin to say how much this attitude damages our faith, our Christian conduct, and also the material aspect of our lives. Anyone who thinks that the time set aside for prayer to God is unproductive, despises it and devotes himself entirely to physical activities, does not believe the one who says, "Without me ye can do

nothing" (John 15:5); nor does he realize that the Lord has power over life and death, health and sickness, and that it was He who made us, so our being alive, our ability to act and our entire existence depend on Him. How can anyone who does not believe in the realities of the present believe in the things to come? And if someone does not have firm faith concerning what is to come, and what is promised and threatened after death, how can he strive to be virtuous? Tell me. For any virtue which is not accomplished for God's sake and on account of the promises and warnings about what happens after death, is not really a virtue. Do you see that it is impossible to have sure faith and genuine virtue without persisting wholeheartedly in hymns and supplications? And why mention only faith and virtue? We cannot even perform our daily work well unless we share in God's assistance through earnest entreaty.

10. Yet some might say that many of us, without going to church frequently, or constantly attending the services and prayers there, not only earn a living but become rich, enjoy a high reputation and are in good physical health. But we must watch lest we suffer all sorts of calamities in our lives as a result, and our course through this world be uneven and full of difficulties. For if we do not call upon God every time we undertake something, and do not have Him working with us, we may offer the evil one a way in. And letting him enter like this not only makes us useless but brings us to a disastrous end. He stirs up people to such a frenzy of rage one against the other about trivial matters and pretexts, that some fall victim to their kinsmen's swords, while others go through life stained by their compatriots' blood, either in their thoughts and souls, or on their murderous hands. For a mind far from God becomes either like a beast or a demon, and once it has gone beyond the bounds of nature it desires what belongs to others and cannot satisfy its greed for gain. Such a man surrenders himself to the lusts of the flesh and recognizes no limit to self-indulgence. He dishonours himself through his deeds, but desires to be revered by all. It is his wish that everyone should flatter him, agree with him and assist in putting his ideas into practice, and if this does not happen – for how could it? – he is filled with uncontrollable rage. In his anger and aggressiveness towards his fellows he resembles a snake. The man becomes a murderer, and he who was made in God's image and likeness comes to resemble Satan, who was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44).

11. The one cause of all these evils is that our mind is far removed from the fear and remembrance of God, and opens the way for cooperation with the most evil enemy. If, however, every time we do anything we make our soul secure beforehand by means of hymns and prayers to God, our adversary will find no place in us. Then the whole tribe of evils surrounding him will be driven away as well, and harmony, chastity, righteousness, meekness and humility will adorn our souls.[775] Bound to one another by love, we shall live peaceful lives without discord, having Christ, the King of Peace, in our midst through continuous converse with Him.

12. This is why every morning before any work begins God's Church draws us towards it with the sound of hallowed bells. Because daily converse with God through prayer and psalmody calms and transforms all attacks, repulses fleshly desires, blunts covetous thoughts, purges away conceit, destroys envy, educates anger, banishes remembrance of wrongs and, setting aside bitterness and contention, bestows every kind of peace, good order and comfort on towns, homes, souls and bodies, for married people as well as those who have embarked on the monastic life. Put simply, this is the foundation and assurance of everything good, driving away every evil and misfortune and redeeming us from it.

13. What brought Jonah alive on to dry land again when he had been swallowed up by the depths and the sea monster? Was it not the prayer he made to God from the whale? Listen to him bearing witness to this fact: "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord my God, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice" (Jonah 2:2). What brought Hezekiah back to life from the gates of death? Was it not prayer in his case too? Isaiah testifies to this by telling him, "Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years" (Isa. 38:5). What saved Daniel out of the lions' den? Was he not condemned to be thrown into that pit, because he refused to cease his continuous prayer to God (Dan. 6:10–16)? What kept the three young men alive in the midst of the furnace? Listen to them saying there, "Deal with us after thy forbearance and according to the multitude of thy mercy. Deliver us also, and grant glory to thy name" (S. of III Ch. 19–20).

14. Leaving those in ancient times, however, let us consider people who were released from the dangers afflicting them in

accordance with the gospel of grace. What restored to life the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, after she had died, as we have just heard Luke proclaiming in his Gospel? Was it not her father's supplication to God (Luke 8:41)? What gave cleansing to the lepers (Luke 17:13)? Surely the same again. What bestowed sight on the two pairs of blind men (Matt. 9:27–31; 20:29–34)? Two of them were even rebuked by the crowd and told to be silent, but they cried all the more, and so their prayer was granted. What restored the Canaanite woman's daughter to her in good health, although she was an outcast according to the law? Was it not her persistent entreaty to the Lord (Matt. 15:22–28)? But let us forget everything else now and call to mind those who were our fellow citizens, who have received eternal, heavenly crowns and are venerated by us. What marked out, even before his holy martyrdom, the wonderful Martyr Nestor as another David against a new Goliath, Lyaeus, when he publicly gained the victory and, having engaged Lyaeus in physical combat and overpowered him by force, destroyed the scornful pride of the tyrant Herculius[776] at the same time? Was it not his plea concerning the task to Demetrius (a great saint, even before the perfection of martyrdom), and through him to God?

15. Prayer to God brings illnesses to an end, cleanses lepers, gives sight to the blind, rescues men from the mouths of fierce creatures on land and in the sea, preserves life in the midst of fire, restores to life from the gates of death, resurrects even those who have died and shows them as bearers of heavenly crowns, triumphant over visible and invisible enemies. It grants wonderful tokens of victory to those who pray with all their soul. Surely, therefore, it is obvious that dangers come upon us because of our neglect and apathy towards it. "Ask", says the Lord, "and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7–8). And, "If ye", it says, "know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:11). But there is hardly anyone who understands, nobody seeks God (*cf.* Ps. 14:2). If we perceived who it was that created man, who honoured him with His own image, who gave him a place of incorruptible joy to dwell in and, when he became old and unworthy because of sin and fell from the garden

of delight, renewed him through Himself, remade him and called him once again to his former glory and eternal bliss, we would not occupy our minds entirely with material, fleeting concerns. Rather we would seek those things which neither fail nor pass away, and hasten towards them.

16. At present it is as though we were drawing water with a vessel full of holes, or gathering treasures into a torn sack. But you have no wealth? You have no treasure? But you have the desire for these things, and that is sufficient to involve you with all kinds of evil. "They that will be rich fall into temptations and snares of the devil", as the great Paul says (*cf.* 1 Tim. 6:9). So let us, brethren, long for and seek those things which are above, that in this present life we may obtain and enjoy the things here below without suffering harm, and not lose the future, heavenly rewards in the life to come, by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ.

17. To whom belong all glory, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FIFTY-TWO

DELIVERED ON THE FEAST OF THE ENTRY OF OUR EXCEEDINGLY PURE LADY, THE MOTHER OF GOD, INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES[777]

IF A TREE IS KNOWN BY ITS FRUIT, and a good tree brings forth good fruit (*cf.* Matt. 7:17, Luke 6:43–44), how could she who is the Mother of Goodness itself,[778] who gave birth to that Beauty which has no beginning,[779] not be incomparably more excellent and beautiful than anything good on earth and in heaven?[780] The power who made all things fair,[781] the co-sempiternal, express Image of Goodness, the pre-eternal, supraessential and supremely good Word of the Father most high,[782] wished in His ineffable love and compassion for mankind to put on our image, in order to recall our human nature, which had been dragged down into the inmost recesses of Hades, to renew it after it had grown old, and to raise it up beyond the heavenly heights to His kingdom and divinity.[783] He united His person with our humanity,[784] and, since it was necessary for Him to assume flesh that was both new and our own, in order to renew us by means of what was ours, He also had to be carried in the womb and brought forth as we are, then nurtured after birth and brought up as was appropriate. Becoming like us in all respects for our sake, He found the Ever-Virgin, whom we extol and whose mysterious Entry into the Holy of Holies we celebrate today, to be a most suitable handmaid in every way, able to bestow on Him an undefiled nature from her own. God determined before all ages that she should be for the salvation and restoration of our race, and chose her from all mankind down through the ages, not simply from among ordinary folk, but from all the elect of every age, who were admired and renowned for their piety and understanding, and who were both beneficial to all and well-pleasing to God in their ways, words and deeds.

2. In the beginning, the supremely evil spiritual serpent rose up against us and drew us down to the depths of Hades. There were many factors which stirred him up against us, and by means of which he enslaved human nature: envy and jealousy and hatred, injustice and guile and false reasoning, and, in addition to such evils, that deadly power he possessed,[785] which he had engendered in himself as the first to depart from true life.[786] He envied Adam from the start when he saw him dwelling in the garden of incorruptible delight, surrounded by the radiance of godlike glory, and being led up from earth to heaven, from which he, the devil, had been justly cast down. In his envy he raged against man with the utmost fury, to the point of wanting to put him to death. Jealousy is the father not only of hatred but also of murder, which the deceitful snake, the hater of mankind,[787] inflicted on us linked with guile. Completely unjustly he desired absolute power over man, so as to ruin the creature formed by God in His own image and likeness. Since, however, he did not dare to attack man to his face, he used guile and cunning.[788] By means of the visible snake,[789] the terrible enemy and traitor approached as a friend and good counsellor, and, without being detected, managed to pour the deadly venom of his power into man by giving him advice against God.

3. If Adam had held fast then to the divine commandment and rejected the evil counsel to go against it, he would have been shown to be victorious over his opponent and superior to deadly corruption, by forcefully putting his frenzied and treacherous assailant to shame. Because, however, he willingly gave in, as he ought on no account to have done, he suffered defeat and came to nothing. As the root of the human race, he produced us as shoots subject to death just as he was. If we were to struggle to overcome our defeat, regain victory, shake off the venom killing our souls and bodies and lay hold once more on eternal life free from harm, our human race obviously needed a new root, a New Adam, who was not only sinless, but also completely incapable of being deceived or defeated.[790] He also had to be able to forgive sins, to make the guilty innocent, and not just to live but to bring others to life, so that he could pass on life and remission of sins to those who attached themselves to him and belonged to the same

stock, and restore to life not just those who died from then on, but also those who had died before his time.

4. Paul, the great trumpet of the Spirit, cried out saying, "The first man was made a living soul; the second man was made a quickening spirit" (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:45, 47, Gen. 2:7). No one but God is sinless, life-creating and able to forgive sins. So the New Adam had to be not only a man but God: to be, literally, life, wisdom, righteousness, mercy and everything else good, in order to accomplish the renewal of the Old Adam and his restoration to life with mercy, wisdom and justice – the very opposite of those evil means used by the spiritual and most wicked serpent to cause us to grow old and die.

5. Whereas he who was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44) rose up against us out of jealousy and hatred, the prince of life (Acts 3:15) was moved to act for our sake because of His surpassing love for man and His goodness. He truly desired the salvation of His creature by bringing him once more under His authority and rescuing him, just as the originator of evil unjustly longed to destroy the work of God's hands by bringing man into subjection to himself and imposing his absolute authority. The enemy achieved his victory and man's fall by means of injustice, guile, deceit and false reasoning,[791] but the Liberator brought about the final defeat of the chief of evil and the renewal of His creature by means of righteousness, wisdom and truth. But now is not the time to speak of the wisdom revealed in the divine dispensation.

6. Precise justice demanded that the same human nature which had been willingly enslaved and defeated must fight to win back victory and rid itself of voluntary servitude. For this reason, it was God's good pleasure to assume our nature from us, uniting it mysteriously with His person. His sublime purity beyond our understanding could not, however, become one with defiled human nature.[792] Only this is impossible for God: to be joined in union with something impure before it has been cleansed. A completely undefiled and most pure virgin was needed to carry in her womb and give birth to the lover and giver of purity. This virgin was marked out beforehand, brought to perfection and revealed, and the mystery concerning her was fulfilled, by many wonderful happenings from various times in the past converging into one.

7. Those other wonders which at some time contributed to this great mystery are also celebrated by us today, because we recognize from the outcome just how significant those events were which led to

so great an end. He who is from God, with God and is God, the Word and Son of God who, like the heavenly Father, has no beginning and no end, becomes the Son of man, the son of the Ever-Virgin. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8), unchanging in His divinity, blameless in His humanity. He alone, as Isaiah had already foretold, "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22, *cf.* Isa. 53:9). And not only that: He alone was not shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (*cf.* Ps. 51:5), as David testified concerning himself and everyone else, in order that He might also be completely pure and undefiled in respect of the flesh He had assumed, and would not require any purifying sacrifices for Himself on its account. Thus, by transferring to us His purification as well as His passion, in a way that is both just and full of wisdom, He could accept both His death and resurrection for our sake. For the physical impulse to reproduce is involuntary and does not obey the law of our mind, although some do bring it forcibly into subjection, while others chastely give rein to it solely for the purpose of begetting children. Nevertheless, it brings with it the symbols of original condemnation, and this is what is called corruption, and rightly so, for it obviously gives birth to offspring that will perish, and it is the passionate urge of human beings who did not retain the dignity assigned to our nature by God, but have become like beasts.[793]

8. God was not just born among men, but born of a holy and pure virgin or, more precisely, of this exceedingly pure and most holy of virgins, who was not only above any physical stain, but also far beyond the reach of any defiled, carnal thoughts. Her conception of Christ resulted from the all-holy Spirit coming upon her, not from fleshly desire, and was preceded by the annunciation and her faith in the in-dwelling of God in a manner we cannot describe, as it was outside the normal course of events and beyond words, but not by submission to, or any experience of, passionate desire. Having utterly banished such desire by prayer and spiritual joy,[794] she conceived and gave birth – "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). In order that there would be a virgin equal to this task, God pre-ordained this ever-virgin Maid whom we extol today, and chose her from among His elect down through the ages.

9. Note the starting-point of God's election. The excellent Seth was chosen by God from among Adam's children (*cf.* Gen. 4:25-5:8). By his orderly conduct, his control over his senses and his magnificent virtue, he showed himself to be a living heaven, and so he became one

of God's chosen (Luke 3:38), from whom the Virgin would appear as a chariot fit to bear God who transcends the heavens, to call men back to adoption as sons of the heavenly Father.

10. That is why all Seth's descendants were called God's sons (Gen. 6:2, 4), because from this race the Son of God was to be born the Son of man. The name Seth can be interpreted to mean "resurrection", or rather "a rising up from",[795] which actually refers to the Lord, who promises and gives everlasting life to those who believe in Him. How appropriate a figure Seth was to represent Christ! Seth was born to Eve, as Eve herself says, "instead of Abel" (Gen. 4:25), whom Cain envied and murdered, whereas the Virgin's son, Christ, came to the human race instead of Adam, whom the prince and patron of evil killed out of envy. Seth, however, did not raise up Abel, as he was merely a prefiguration of the resurrection, but our Lord Jesus Christ resurrected Adam, for He is the true life and resurrection of mankind (*cf.* John 11:25), through whom Seth's descendants were deemed worthy, in hope, of divine adoption, being called sons of God (*cf.* Gen. 6:2–4). That they were referred to as God's sons on account of this hope, is demonstrated by the first man to be so called and to attain God's election. This was Seth's son Enos who, as Moses wrote, "was the first who hoped to be called by God's name" (Gen. 4:26 LXX).[796] Do you see that it was through hope that he came to be called after God?

11. Having begun with Adam's sons, God's selection according to His foreknowledge for the sake of the future Mother of God was accomplished down through the generations until it reached the king and prophet David, the successors to his throne and his descendants. When the time came for God's choice to reach its culmination, Joachim and Anna, of the house and lineage of David, were picked out by Him.[797] They were childless, but lived chastely together, and were more virtuous than all those who traced back their noble descent and character to David. With asceticism and prayer they begged God to deliver them from childlessness, and promised to dedicate to Him from infancy the child to be born to them.[798] She who is now the Mother of God was promised and given to them by God as their daughter, that the girl with every virtue might be born of virtuous parents, the all-pure Maid of those who were exceptionally chaste, and that chastity, coming together with prayer and asceticism, might become as a result the mother of virginity, that virginity which without corruption brought forth, according to the flesh, the one who, in respect of

His divinity, was begotten before all ages of a virgin Father. O, the wings of that prayer! With what boldness it came before God!

12. Since they had obtained that for which they had prayed, and knew the divine promise to them had been fulfilled, they in turn kept their promise to God. Being truthful people, dear to God and God-loving, they hastened, as soon as she was weaned, to bring the Most Holy Virgin, God's child and now the Mother of God, to His Temple, to the chief priest there.[799] Even at that tender age, being full of divine graces and not wanting in the perfection of her mental faculties, she understood, more than anyone else did at the time, what was happening to her.[800] She showed as best she could that, rather than being led, she was coming to God by herself and of her own volition, as though it were natural for her to fly towards holy and divine love, and to consider entering the Holy of Holies and dwelling there as something desirable which she knew was fitting for her.[801]

13. When God's high priest understood that the Maid apparently possessed divine grace above all others, he had to count her worthy of something more excellent than anyone else deserved. He led her into the Holy of Holies and then persuaded everyone to be content with what had happened. At the same time, God was also helping, showing His approval and sending heavenly nourishment defying description to the Virgin in that place, by the hand of an angel.[802] This food strengthened her physically, and she was sustained and perfected in body with more purity and excellence than the bodiless angels, having heavenly beings to minister to her. She was not simply brought once into the Holy of Holies but was, as it were, taken into God's company for a period of several years,[803] so that through her, when the time came, the heavenly mansions might be opened and be given as everlasting dwellings to those who believe in her mysterious childbearing.

14. In this way, and for these reasons, she who was chosen from the elect of all ages, who was declared the Holy of Holies, whose body was purer and more divine than spirits cleansed by virtue, to such an extent that she was able to receive not just the form of divine words but the person of the only-begotten Word of the Father without beginning, was today[804] justly consigned to the innermost hallowed sanctuary like God's treasure. When the time came, this treasure was to be used to enrich and adorn both heaven and earth, as indeed came to pass. Thus and on this account the Lord glorified His Mother before she gave birth, as well as afterwards. As for us,

understanding the salvation which was begun for us through her, may we render as much thanksgiving and praise as we can. In the Gospel it is written that a woman, having listened for a while to the Lord's saving words, gratefully pronounced a blessing on His Mother and gave thanks, lifting up her voice and crying out to the Lord from the crowd, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked" (Luke 11:27). As for us, we constantly have the words of eternal life in writing, and not just Christ's sayings, but also His miracles and His sufferings, and the raising up of our human nature from the dead accomplished by these sufferings, the ascension of our human nature from earth to heaven and the everlasting life and irrevocable salvation promised to us as a result. So how can we do other than extol and bless without ceasing the Mother of the Bestower of salvation, the giver of life, celebrating her conception, her birth, and now her coming to dwell in the Holy of Holies?

15. Let us too, brethren, move our dwelling-place from earth to on high. Let us be changed "from flesh to spirit",[805] and transfer our longing from fleeting concerns to things that endure. Let us despise the pleasures of the flesh, which were invented as a bait to trap the soul, and soon pass away, and let us desire spiritual gifts which stay incorruptible. Let us raise our disposition and our thoughts from the disorder below and lift them up to the heavenly sanctuary, to that Holy of Holies where the Mother of God now dwells.

16. So shall our songs and prayers to her come before her with boldness pleasing to God for our benefit. Then, by her intercession, we shall be heirs not only of good things here and now, but of those lasting blessings to come, by the grace and love for mankind of Him who was born of her for our sake, Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom belong glory, honour and worship, together with the Father who is without beginning and the co-eternal, life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FIFTY-THREE

ON THE ENTRY INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES OF OUR EXCEEDINGLY PURE LADY MOTHER OF GOD AND EVER-VIRGIN MARY AND HER DIVINE MANNER OF LIFE THERE[806]

WHEN TASKS EXCEED HUMAN STRENGTH, whether it be necessary to move something very heavy or to engage in a struggle with words, men outstanding in their excellent physical strength and eloquence find themselves in the same position as those completely incapable in both respects, because they are all equally unable to achieve anything or to succeed in their purpose. If someone attempts to touch the stars with his hand, even though he is tall and stretches his arm further than the rest, he is almost as far away from those ethereal heights as men of much shorter stature, the difference not being worth mentioning. In the same way, on subjects transcending words, eminent speakers are not significantly better at saying something than anyone else. Who can attempt to treat of matters which utterly defy all words without being seen to give way beneath the weight of these topics, like those reputed to have boasted they could counterbalance the weight of the universe,[807] or those in the myth who attempted to make their way up to heaven?[808] Men who make such attempts are as far from the truth as their aims are beyond the grasp of human minds and speech, being outside the sphere of this world, based far above the earth and its surroundings, and reckoned among things holy and divine.

2. The highest summit of all the saints, the Mother of God, passes, in the words of the Psalm, "Into the place of the wonderful tabernacle", entering the Holy of Holies "with the voice of joy and praise" (Ps. 42:4 LXX), the inspired sound of those escorting her then, and us keeping the festival now.[809] She is more exalted than the saints in heaven, and not only would it be impossible for anyone on his own to come anywhere near to honouring her as she deserves, but neither could all those together who have been saved by her Son, even if all were to be united as one voice. The whole creation would fall short of offering her the glory that befits her, for she has become the mother of the Creator of all. How could any words of ours adequately express the great things done for her by her Son, even taking all of us together? Would our words not be as the tiniest drop of water compared with the inexpressible abyss of her glory? Thus is this undertaking beyond my powers, and so far am I from supposing that I can devise words of praise commensurate with the superhuman virtue of the Mother of God, she who is truly blessed and superior in every way to the entire creation.

3. But how else can I fulfil my longing, settle my debt, or express my thanks for her countless gracious gifts to me, except by extolling her as best I can? For love persuades me and obligation, both our common indebtedness and my own personal duty, compels me. The grace which I have already received promises forgiveness hereafter for what follows, and the unfailing love for mankind of the ever-virgin Bride is a continual presence among all those who hear, encompassing all things and holding them in being. For she is near and ever standing by those who call upon her, through her tireless and most effective intercession to God her Son, which accomplishes all things for our good, as we ourselves know, having learnt from the benefits we have received, and having had our faith strengthened as a result.

4. Calling upon her with this faith, I hope to have her as my support to the end as I plunge now into the ocean of her wonders. I do not consider it necessary to make excuses to you who are around me for what will come later in my homily. You will easily forgive when you take everything into account: the speaker, the words, the extraordinary subject, and also the fact that each of you also needs everyone else's forgiveness when you compose various hymns to the Mother of God. (And, of course, many such hymns are written by you, because we are all obliged to pay this tribute to the Mother of

God, as a community and as individuals, alone and in co-operation with others.) But even as you attempt to render the praise you owe, still you realize that you are far from extolling her as is meet. For that reason you also share the odes composed for her down through the ages, and continually, every day and hour, form an inspired, harmonious and ceaseless choir around the heavenly bridechamber.

5. Come then, holy company, hallowed audience, choir in harmony with the Holy Spirit, and assist me with this address, making it a joint effort, not just by listening attentively and directing your thoughts, but also by providing help through your sincere prayers, that the Word of the Father may join in from heaven with my words about His Mother, and grant that I may not strike a completely discordant note, but rather produce something pleasing to the ears of God-loving men. Those who prepare themselves for such feats need God's abundant aid, for they are accomplished only by heavenly inspiration, and are more fitting and perfect than anything else achieved down the ages. In the beginning, God put on earth every kind of sensible, sentient creature, but as none of these at all had a mind,[810] He formed man with this capacity. As the human race progressed, there was no one able to contain God, as the situation demanded, "By whom are all things, and for whom are all things", to use the apostle's phrase (*cf.* Heb. 2:10). So later He graciously willed to create this ever-virgin Maid, His palace, if I may use the expression, who was shown to be capable of holding the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9) on account of her utmost purity, able not simply to contain Him but – O marvellous wonder! – to bring Him to birth and to form for all men, before and after her time, ties of kinship with God.

6. Two races were chosen by God throughout the ages, and between these two stands the Mother of God, conspicuous in her pre-eminence, the living image of everything good, the human icon of every virtue, the shrine and focal point of divine and human graces, to be emulated, as it were, by heaven and earth and what lies beyond them, to the common benefit of all. She is the sacred starting point of the spiritual Israel, by which I mean all Christian people, because she was the cause of Him who is above all causality, and through Him she lifted men up from the earth and rendered them heavenly, showing them to be spirit instead of flesh, and making them children of God. As for the carnal Israel, of whom she was born according to the flesh, she exalted her ancestors to such glory that through her they

are called God's forefathers.[811] Indeed, to express the honour of the virgin Bride as is her due, she did not just act as a mediator for certain chosen races, but, standing between God and every race of men, she made God the Son of man, and men the sons of God. She alone was shown to be the natural mother of God in a supernatural way, and by her indescribable child-bearing she became the Queen of the entire creation in this world and beyond, for "all things were made by him" who was born of her, "and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3).

7. The symbols of her rule are not that she has at her disposal crowns such as the masses will never touch, nor choice gems, ornaments and fabrics, nor regal costume different from the attire of common people. Such things were invented for those kings who cannot rise above what is earthly, and whose clothes reign rather than their souls. Instead, the tokens of her royal power are indescribable graces beyond our comprehension, abilities and energies surpassing nature and directed heavenwards, higher still than the adornments of heaven. They are prophecies and divine tidings transforming the laws of nature for the better; the coming of the divine Spirit, the overshadowing by the power of the Highest, the extraordinary combination of conception and virginity; the self-emptying of God's Word; the pregnancy of the ever-virgin Maid; and most miraculous of miracles: the delivery of a babe from the womb, the birth from a mother who knew no husband, without destroying the symbols of virginity, but preserving them intact.

8. Who can look into the innermost sanctuary, not to mention enter its depths? Who can reach even the outer doors of the place where He who dwells far above all that exists rested, the King of heaven and sovereign Lord, who by His nature has power over all things? What words can come anywhere near being worthy of her, even if, without attempting to speak of her directly, they tell of matters concerning her, which happened before and after her indescribable child-bearing? Who can adequately describe how she was provided with ineffable nourishment, how people were guided from above to come from far away to venerate her, the praise sung by a multitude of angels which united heaven and earth, and brought both into obedience to this universal Queen? Prior to all these events, however, and because of them, there were pronouncements by inspired prophets, miracles which obscurely foreshadowed the great miracle to come, spiritual

ordinances which prefigured in various ways the truth that was to be, changes affecting nations and history which opened the way for the new mystery to be accomplished, the promise which God made and kept to Joachim and Anna that they would have a child in old age, although they had been childless since their youth, and this admirable couple's vow to God that they would give back the gift of their daughter to the giver. In accordance with this truly worthy and most righteous vow, they went up to the holy Temple with their promised child, and the heavenly Queen made her extraordinary entry into the Holy of Holies, the place reserved solely for God, where He once a year received the current high priests when they went in (Exod. 30:10, Lev. 16:2, 34, Heb. 9:7), and where the Virgin Mother entered at three years of age, and stayed for our sake.[812]

9. We keep festival this day because we have seen the prize won for the good of us all by her unrivalled patient endurance there: God's marvellous descent to earth through her and our own glorious ascent to heaven through Him. While the holy Maid dwelt in the innermost sanctuary, she "Made high ascents in her heart" (Ps. 84:5 Lxx), which truly reached as far as the heavens themselves, and drew the heavenly Lord thence to us. There, according to the Scripture, "The king's daughter was all glorious within" (Ps. 45:13), and, as she was vastly superior to the rest of mankind in the inexpressible beauty of her purity, it pleased the Creator to prepare from her, His creature, as from radiant gold, an image sharing His divine nature,[813] and "being made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7) – O Lord, how ineffable is your love for mankind! – He adapted the work of His hands to be worthy of Him, its Maker.

10. Do you see how the Virgin's wreath was woven? Do you see how we all benefit from her royal attire? How it was not by chance that the virgin Queen of all brought her fellow human beings into subjection to herself and ruled over them. She attributed nothing more than names to herself, and brought her compatriots into submission in accordance with earthly ordinances, which permit some people to rise higher than those prostrate, but not than those standing upright.[814] But she exalted all those below her through herself, and showed what it meant to be a heavenly subject instead of an earthly one. Partaking of higher honour, superior power and heavenly election, she became the highest Queen of all and the most blessed Sovereign of a blessed race, sending out all around her, from both body and soul, bright and holy rays of light. Wishing to establish an icon of everything good,

and to give a clear demonstration to both angels and men that He was able to do so, the Creator made her an adornment of things visible and invisible. He brought together a blend of all divine and human graces, a sublime beauty to enhance both worlds. Thus He truly made her of such exquisite beauty,[815] uniting all the separate components with which He had adorned the universe, showing us an extraordinary aspect of that creative power which is exclusively His, as was truly fitting for the Mother of the light.

11. In the beginning, when God set the greater light to rule the day, first He made light scattered freely everywhere, then the disc of the sun to receive it (Gen. 1:1–3, 16–18). In the same way, He now displayed His ever-virgin Mother as the lampstand of the divine, ineffable light of everything virtuous. Whereas previously goodness had been dispersed among all, later every kind of virtue was brought together in her in a way past understanding or description, so high had she ascended. All those things which, distributed to the noblest of every age, were sufficient to make them great, and everything which those angels and men who found favour with God were in part, she gathered together. She alone, having brought all these gifts to perfection and multiplied them inexpressibly, pours out abundant grace on those who honour her, also granting that they may reach up to her as the receptacle of great graces, and in her goodness lavishing even more excellent favours upon them. Nor will she ever cease being mercifully disposed towards all mankind, providing everything beneficial and assisting us plentifully.

12. Anybody who considers how she represents and bestows everything good, will say that the Virgin fulfils the same rôle as regards virtue for those living virtuously as the sun does in relation to visible light for those who live by it, and that what happened to light in the beginning foreshadowed and prefigured the wonders to be accomplished later concerning her. If, however, you turn the eyes of your understanding towards the Sun, who rose marvellously upon men from her, and who has by His nature all the gifts which accrued to her by grace, and more besides; if you turn your mind's eye to Him, the Virgin will immediately appear to be heaven, blessed with the possession of everything noble, and as much more radiant than divinely favoured beings both on earth and in heaven, just as the heavens are larger than the sun, though the sun is brighter than the heavens.

13. What words, O Mother of God and Virgin, can describe your divinely radiant beauty? Your qualities cannot be circumscribed by thoughts or words, for they transcend our minds and speech. But it is possible to sing your praises if you, in your charity, so permit. In you all graces are to be found. You are the perfection of nobleness in all its forms, the living portrait of every virtue and kindness. You alone were vouchsafed the gifts of the Spirit in their totality, or rather, you alone held mysteriously in your womb Him in whom are the treasures of all these spiritual gifts, and became inexplicably His tabernacle. Therefore, you were the object of His care from your infancy, even in respect of physical needs, and He paradoxically accepted you from your childhood as His companion, showing from that time forward, by means of such strange events as this, that you were the unchanging shrine of all His graces.

14. You were deemed worthy of much higher privileges than were granted to other men. Your birth was extraordinary, your upbringing even stranger, and your childbearing, without knowing anything of men, was yet more supremely mysterious. Whereas your birth was adorned with pledges made by God and human beings, that is to say, by your parents – for when they received His promise they rightly vowed you, the promised child, to Him in return[816] – you yourself were also beautified with heavenly promises at various times, and enriched the whole world with them. Before long you received the tidings of Him from whom and through whom so great a promise was made (Luke 1:26–38), that the promises to God's friends down through the ages which found fulfilment in you, and the great visions they beheld, seemed merely like obscure reflections and vague ideas in comparison. You alone fulfilled all their visions, surpassing our common human nature by means of your union with God, not just when you gave birth in a marvellous way, but also through the preceding fellowship with Him in everything good, which resulted from your utter purity.

15. It was fitting that the Mother of Him who is "fairer than the sons of men" (Ps. 45:2) should herself be altogether unrivalled and be furnished by her child with amazing beauty, in order that, completely resembling her in every detail, He might be recognized as the Son of the ever-virgin Maid, because of His obvious likeness to her in all respects. Thus, everyone whose eyes beheld Him would proclaim the origin according to the flesh of the Son without human father. It would clearly

have been unreasonable if He, who by His word formed this universe and made it fair with all sorts of beautiful things, had not passed on to her that same power to create beauty, which through her He Himself was to receive by nature, and in which He knew that shortly He was to share. This is why He who adorned the lilies of the field more excellently than Solomon's royal attire (Matt. 6:28–29, Luke 12:27), also arrayed the Virgin, from whom He would be clothed in human flesh, in this extraordinary fashion, making her admirable in the eyes of all, as she is the divine repository of every single noble and good attribute, and of them all collectively. In her alone, of all men down through the ages, there is absolutely no sign of any deficiency in any respect. She is as far superior to all in everything as the heavens are higher than the earth, to such an extent that she appears to us as though to men standing at a great distance, like star-gazers, looking steadfastly in her direction.

16. The reason mankind was brought into being by God was so that they might apprehend with their senses the sky, the earth, and everything they contain, as visible objects, and by means of them go beyond them with their minds to invisible beauties, that they might sing the praises of God, the one Creator of all. No one could say, however, that the Virgin whom we now extol was made for this purpose, but rather in order to persuade those who beheld her to marvel at the Creator. She appeared on earth in all her manifold beauty, as a great wonder outshining heavenly luminaries and angels. It had to be so, because if "the king's daughter is all glorious from within" (Ps. 45:13 LXX),[817] her outward appearance and everything about her could not be out of keeping, but were rightly in harmony and concord with what lay within.

17. This will become clear to you when you realize that the psalmist-prophet's thoughts are tending in the same direction. For he does not say that all the glory of the king's daughter is "within", but "from within" (Ps. 45:13 LXX),[818] meaning that it pours forth like light from within her to without, revealing to all those who see it the magnificence stored up inside her on account of her complete freedom from passion,[819] and making known the exquisite beauty of her virginal soul.[820] If the chaste Joseph is rightly called "all-beautiful" (*cf.* Gen. 39:6),[821] the all-pure Virgin is surely worthiest of all to be so addressed. Is she not as superior to him in beauty as virginity is to chastity, especially virginity which is a match for the angels? Or rather, does she not surpass him to the same extent as all virtue and

grace, dwelling together with purest virginity in a single soul, surpass chastity? It might not be appropriate to call Joseph all-beautiful in every respect, or perhaps he is called all-beautiful only with regard to his body. By contrast, however, even the Virgin's soul is synonymous with everything good, which she bears as truly all-beautiful in her most pure body, so that to those who see as we do,[822] it appears to come from without, but to the discerning spirit of prophecy it is known to come from within.[823]

18. Possessing so many spiritual gifts and natural endowments from her mother's womb, she did not take in any sort of additional knowledge[824] – for this in my opinion is how we should regard what is learned from lessons – by studying with teachers. Instead, making her sovereign mind obedient to God in everything, she decisively abandoned human instruction and so received abundant wisdom from above,[825] at an age when parents place children into the care of teachers and hand them over to schoolmasters, regardless of their own will, because they are so young. Within the inmost sanctuary, as though in a sublime palace, she was committed to God, as a living, royal throne, higher than any other, and provided with all the virtues appropriate to the great King who was to sit there.

19. This living shrine of the King of all ought not to be set before the eyes of all, as those words of Scripture also testify: "which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16), meaning "which no man can see". Because, therefore, the tabernacle where the Most High rested on earth ought not to have the whole course of her life on show, the Virgin Mother desired to settle in the Holy of Holies immediately from infancy, the dwelling-place, as David calls it, of the holy name (Ps. 74:7). Where could be more fitting for her who was truly the holiest of all to dwell? Where else could be better for God's tent to be pitched? Surely it was absolutely necessary for the actual tabernacle to be set up in the same place as the figurative one? She was the tabernacle in which He who is seated above the whole creation rested, the true King, the Lord of all rulers, who is marvellously clad in the many-coloured kingly robe woven from both created and uncreated natures.[826] His tabernacle does not shine with the brightness of precious metals, but because it is full of spiritual graces. It does not hold symbols of angels or the first-fruits of physical prototypes,[827] but bears within it the inexpressible supernatural radiance of spiritual purity, a will conformed to God's, the divinely lovely brilliance of virginity, the magnificent lustre of all

that is good and, to put it concisely, the place which truly held God who encompasses everything.

20. It was because Moses foresaw that she would be the living tabernacle who would hold God that he erected that other tabernacle, prepared that inmost sanctuary for her sake and, learning from God what would befall her, dignified it with sublimely exalted names, indicating to all in advance, by word and deed, the extraordinary, all-surpassing worthiness that would be hers from infancy. But the holy young Virgin did not take possession of this most fitting place from the beginning of her life – receiving as she did the honour of being God's tabernacle and living high above everyone else – solely because she outstripped all in the worthiness of her character, but also because, by so doing, she was presenting visible proof of the great mystery that would happen to her. For, strange as it seems, the holy Maid took as her home for several years the place assigned to God alone, which was consecrated as His dwelling, and out of which He gave audience at infrequent intervals to Moses, Aaron and those of their successors who were equally worthy, and where He was also believed to reside continuously between those encounters. In this way she made it clear, and declared in advance to as many as have understanding, that she was to be the true shrine and resting-place of God, an incomparably better mercy-seat for Him, and the divinely beautiful treasure-house of the highest pinnacle of the Spirit's mysteries.

21. In addition to what we have said, the Virgin was also silently making an important statement to the onlookers, that she was not being unreasonable in choosing to live in quietness and solitude. The Holy of Holies was out of sight of almost everyone, shut off from everybody, and protected by encircling walls and curtains, with veils and hangings before the entrances, which were never opened for anyone except the high priest according to the law, and only once a year for him, when he entered to gain God's mercy for himself and those outside (*cf.* Lev. 16:6, 11, 15). So how could the altar of the delight of the angels, the field in which the evergreen, or rather, eternal plant grows, the mercy-seat for the whole of mankind, into which the High Priest with the highest divine authority (Heb. 6:20; 7:26), the only one suitable for us, according to the apostle, entered once, and where He reconciled God to men and inseparably united them; how could this virginal treasure be kept anywhere else but in this innermost sanctuary, passing her life invisible to all?

22. If, according to the apostle, "the world was not worthy" even of the holy men of old, how could it deserve her who was higher than the saints of heaven? Understand also from this just how excellent the Virgin is. The former saints, when they fled from dwelling among men, were given, as the same apostle tells us, deserts, mountains and caves of the earth to live in (Heb. 11:38), whereas she was granted the Holy of Holies as her home. And the all-pure Virgin was allowed to go to live there even before she could be considered to have reached childhood, although she showed that she was more sensible than those who had attained to the age of reason, as we shall go on to demonstrate.

23. She was a gift from God, and to God, even before she was born – how could she be otherwise, as she was pre-ordained before all ages as the dwelling-place of the Maker of all worlds? She was a gift to God and the fruit of her righteous parents' vow and supplication – O the wings of that prayer! What boldness it found before the Lord! How spotless their hearts must have been to be able to offer up a prayer so far-reaching and effective![828] As the fruit of such a vow the Virgin was brought by her parents to the giver, like a beloved votive offering. (O finest of couples! O elect pair who cultivated and presented to God a dwelling-place dearer than heaven!) She was brought, like a most holy shoot sprung from a holy root, a shoot reaching from earth to heaven, so great was its honour, a shoot which would soon bring forth the pre-eternal, unfading flower, and was to produce Him by whose word alone everything natural and supernatural sprang to life. This shoot was led to be planted – Come forward, David, with your harp to express this in song – "Like a green olive tree in the house of God" (Ps. 52:8), "Like a tree", which will bear the perfection of God's mystery and will bring forth fruit inexplicably "by the rivers of water" of the Spirit (Ps. 1:3).

24. The Mother of God was led up to God by her parents, not as a young girl, nor as a child, nor just slightly younger than that, but as a three-year-old who had been weaned and taken from her mother's breast only a day or two before. But at that age she gave proof of discernment worthy of those capable of making sound decisions, for she was clearly seen to go forward with unspeakable joy. When they were already near the outer doors of the Temple, while noble young women, dressed in a fashion worthy of their race, were surrounding her with torches in their hands and eagerly escorting her in dignified procession, she demonstrated that she was more aware than anyone

else of what was happening to her and what was going to take place. Solemn, graceful and admired, she was making her orderly way among the others, with a wonderfully calm bearing, manner and purpose defying description. Then, tempering decorum with eagerness and gently quickening her pace, she left behind the choir of virgins encircling her, taking the lead in front of them all, that it might become obvious that those words of the Psalm refer to her: "The virgins that follow her shall be brought unto the king. Her companions shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing: they shall be led into the king's temple" (Ps. 45:14–15 LXX).

25. As soon as the high priest came out to meet her, and surely spoke that prophetic verse to her, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty" (Ps. 45:10–11), she stopped reverently for a moment, then, on hearing these words, she rose up again. Immediately leaving everyone behind, her parents, nurses and contemporaries, she separated herself from the assembled company and went forward to the high priest, absolutely alone and full of joy. Turning her gracious and gentle gaze upon him, she affirmed with whatever gestures she could, and with childish murmurings, her wholehearted devotion to God.[829]

26. How can these events fail to inspire amazement? The three-year-old puts herself into the hands of him who can direct her course in accordance with higher providence. She makes her own wise choice between nature and its Creator, and gives higher esteem to what is better. She chooses God instead of her mother and father's embrace, and prefers God's Temple and its high priest to being cosseted at home. Reckoning all these things worthless, but valuing God and everything pertaining to Him above all else, she ran gladly towards His Temple. Surely it was of her that David the prophet said to God, "Justice and judgment are the preparation of thy throne" (Ps. 89:14 LXX), and "Righteousness and judgment are the achievement of his throne" (Ps. 97:2 LXX). For she is styled the living throne of God, and in fact this honour belongs solely to her (because the word "throne" in the singular is not actually used of the bodiless, heavenly orders). It is through her rather than by means of those angelic Thrones that the foundation of great justice and ineffable righteousness came about and was revealed. So even before her birth the Virgin's discerning judgement was extolled, and now, before she had grown up, she publicly demonstrated its steadfastness.

27. Whereas Moses' tongue, although slow in other respects, nevertheless clearly proclaimed its own lack of discretion in his youth (Exod. 4:10),[830] preserving traces of that flame, which is used, as the saying goes, for the testing of our mind's discernment, and the brightness of which is preferred to the radiance of gold. As for the other things we hear about him, to a certain extent they are good signs of his soul's future valour, but even these tokens are scarcely worthy of admiration compared to the events we are presently considering. For how could a kingly crown adorned with gold leaf and bright gems (*cf.* Exod. 28:36–29:6)[831] appeal to a child's mentality as much as her mother's warm and loving embrace and appropriate care? Yet the Virgin voluntarily disdained these comforts. She ran towards God with unrestrainable love and persevered on her own in the inner sanctuary, as though continuously ministering to God in an indescribable way. Nothing of the sort ever happened to Moses. In his case it was fear rather than love for God which drove him away from serving Pharaoh, and this when he was already on the verge of manhood (Exod. 2:15). Later, however, after turning his attention to virtue and struggling to acquire it, and after going up the mountain to God, he was deemed worthy to be initiated into the signs prefiguring the Virgin,[832] and ceaselessly assisted in the preparations for her.

28. Leaving Moses here below with the servants,[833] together with whom he appeared of course, let us turn to those who came to the knowledge of God by themselves and of their own free will. Let us admire Abraham and the far-famed Melchizedek, who turned to God of their own accord – after they had already attained the age of reason. They had observed that great proof pointing us to God: this universe; the earth; what surrounds it; the combination of elements; the noble harmony of opposites; the vast boundary formed by the heavens which encircle the visible portion of creation;[834] the multitude of stars fixed therein; their varied and wonderful disposition and their movement, which is neither simple nor conflicting, but harmonious, orderly and lyrical; their progress around their orbits; their conjunctions; their shared paths; their alterations; the significant formations which result, according to what experts in these matters tell us.[835] These things and everything else which happens according to nature's laws proclaim God who is eternally above them.

29. The Virgin, by contrast, could not turn her eyes upon any of these natural wonders – she was not old enough – yet she understood God,

and rejoiced as she was brought to Him. Or rather, she approached of her own volition, as though it were natural for her to wing her way towards holy and divine love. When God's high priest saw that the Virgin had dwelling within her from infancy such graces as hardly enter other people's souls in the fullest prime of life, and then only if they are among the elect, and that she would possess these gifts throughout her life in far greater abundance than anyone else, he deemed her worthy of a more excellent honour than could be granted to others. He led her into the Holy of Holies and persuaded all those present to accept what had come to pass with God's assistance and by His most righteous decision. For she was to be His chosen vessel, not full of shadows and symbols like the ark, but full of truth. Unlike Paul who came after, she was not to bear God's Name before the Gentiles and kings (*cf.* Acts 9:15), but to carry in her womb Him whose name is Wonderful (Isa. 9:6), so much so that Paul, not Saul (*cf.* Acts 13:11), was made famous, second to none of the most eminent men of any age, because he was counted worthy to bear this name openly.

30. For this reason, if you give proper consideration not only to how any of the outstandingly virtuous men who ever lived started out, but also to the whole course of their struggle for virtue and even their final rewards and crowns from on high, you will find that they fall far short of the first steps of this child of God, which our entire race is now celebrating, commemorating with inexpressible joy her translation from human society into the Holy of Holies. Enoch, too, was taken away from among men (Gen. 5:24), but no public celebration is held for him. Later, Elijah was carried off in a fiery chariot (2 Kgs. 2:11), but he has not become the subject of such a great festival for the whole world, nor did divine bliss take hold of the universe and cause those in heaven to leap for joy with those on earth. After them, a three-year-old girl went to live somewhere else, and the whole world rejoiced and everything was filled with delight, overflowing with divine inspiration. Oh, how great a miracle is this! What power does this child possess? What consummate virtue and transcending majesty? Who is this girl who has overcome the world (*cf.* 1 John 5:4), transformed the human race, removed sadness – the fruit of our forefathers' curse – from mankind, and planted on earth this divine, incorruptible splendour, this joy we all share every year, which never grows old, blooms eternally, and is not subject to the passage of time, which puts an end to everything? But let us return again to our subject.

31. Enoch was translated because he pleased God. Once again, I will ignore the fact that he was three hundred and sixty-five years old and had reached the end of his life, whereas the child we are now considering was three years old when she started on spiritual works. From that time forward she inaugurated graces on earth, and then she immediately established her all-embracing renown, which reached from earth to heaven. God carried away Enoch too, but did He take him to heaven? Certainly not![836] For "no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven", who for our sake was born a man like us of this Holy Virgin, "He who is in heaven" (John 3:13). If, however, it is written that Enoch was moved to somewhere on earth by God, he was clearly taken to a lesser place than that now allotted to the Virgin, for nowhere on earth is more sacred than the Holy of Holies. What happened to him brought no subsequent benefit to mankind. It did not wipe out sin, nor contribute to righteousness, because in the third generation after him that worldwide flood occurred (Gen. 5:21–32; 6:5ff). In the Virgin's time, however, and because of her, the renewal of the world came about. Through her, heaven threw open its gates once more, not to send forth raging torrents of terrible and destructive rain with every blast of wind, but the dew of the Spirit, sweetness for all our souls, the unapproachable light beyond our understanding (*cf.* 1 Tim. 6:16), "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9).

32. If anyone draws attention to the fact that afterwards the Virgin went out among people, he should be aware that he is greatly enhancing her superiority. For as the only-begotten Son of the Father came down from the sanctuary of heaven for our sake, so she too came forth for our sake from the sanctuary of the Temple. The unwedded Bride[837] of the immortal Father was betrothed to a mortal man, not because this was necessary for her, but to make known to us by means of witnesses the great miracle of her indescribable childbearing. The sun rises upon us at intervals and continuously moves around us in a circle, so that no one is hidden from its heat, according to the Scripture – "His going forth", it says, "is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it" (Ps. 19:6), meaning, back to the point at which it came out. In the same way, the all-pure Virgin made her departure from mankind when she entered the Holy of Holies, then she went back among men, in order that, being pre-eminent in holiness, she might share the inalienable gift of hallowing with everyone. Nowhere

was excluded, not even the world's secret places, that is to say, that innermost sanctuary.[838]

33. As the effects of the sun upon us disappear, we need it to continue revolving around us time and time again. Since, however, the gifts bestowed by the Ever-Virgin are incorruptible, she only had to complete one circuit, and by so doing has brought never-ending illumination to all, causing to rise upon us, in a manner defying description, that Sun "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. 1:17). So let us leave God's translation of Enoch, and turn the eyes of our understanding towards the taking up of Elijah, because he accomplished something better than Enoch, leaving his disciple the great gift of his mantle (2 Kgs. 2:13–14), through which Elisha did twice as many miracles. But the Virgin Mother's achievements were far superior to Elijah's. She herself became the wonder of wonders on earth, the greatest marvel of all time for the good of all. She also clothed God's Son Himself in Adam's garment from her womb, through which venerable garment we gained so many benefits that "if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written", as the most theological of the evangelists tells us (John 21:25).

34. But why am I not weaving heavenly brightness into the Virgin's crown, instead of restricting myself to her radiant achievements on earth? Because she was going to give birth as a Virgin to Him whose nature is beyond all, her honour was all-surpassing from her earliest childhood, and incomparably more excellent even than the heavenly beings. To which angel were those words ever said, which were addressed to her while still an infant, "The king shall greatly desire thy beauty" (Ps. 45:11)? Did the angels not rather desire, according to the Scripture, to look into the things bestowed on us through her (*cf.* 1 Pet. 1:12)? Isaiah writes concerning the highest angelic orders, "And seraphims stood round about him" (Isa. 6:2 LXX), whereas David, again, says of her, "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen" (Ps. 45:9). Do you see how they stand in different places? Learn from this the distinction between their ranks. The seraphim are round about God, but only the Queen of all is beside Him, she who is admired and extolled even by God Himself, who, as it were, proclaims her to the powers surrounding Him, saying, as it tells us in the Song of Songs, "How fair is my companion?" (*cf.* Song of Songs 4:1 LXX). She is more radiant than light, richer in flowers than paradise, more beautifully adorned than the whole visible and invisible world. She

is not just next to God, but, as is fitting, on His right hand. For where Christ took His seat in heaven, "on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3), she stands too, not just because she longs for Him, and is longed for in return, more than all others, even according to the dictates of nature, but because she is truly His throne. And where the King sits, there stands the throne.

35. Isaiah saw this throne in the midst of the choir of cherubim and said it was "high and lifted up" (Isa. 6:1), showing that the Mother of God is far exalted above the heavenly powers. If the highest order of the heavenly hierarchies were allotted second place immediately after her, still they are not second in order with regard to honour. Otherwise, although they would be inferior compared to her, she would only be slightly better than they, whereas now she is immeasurably superior to them. Just as we have no other luminary to put second after the sun's orb for abundance of light except the moon, even though it gives very little illumination, so, in the same way, there are no other divinely radiant beings which can be considered second to her except the seraphim. But to anyone who examines the matter carefully, the comparison will hardly appear worthy, as though a torch were being likened to a beacon visible far and wide.[839] That is why the prophet presents the angels themselves glorifying God on her account, saying: "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his throne" (*cf.* Ezek. 3:12). Elsewhere David, uniting in himself the masses of those being saved, and using the different voices of the various races, brought into harmony by her, strikes up that song so appropriate as a hymn, saying: "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever" (Ps. 45:17).

36. Do you see how the whole creation gives thanks to the Virgin Mother, not in years gone by, but for ever and ever to endless ages? From this it can be understood that she too will never cease throughout the ages to do good to the whole creation, not just our own, but also to the immaterial, supernatural orders. For Isaiah gave clear proof that they, like us, only commune with, and touch, the intangible divine nature through her. He did not see the seraph taking the burning coal directly from the altar, but taking it by means of tongs, with which he also touched the prophet's lips and bestowed cleansing (*cf.* Isa. 6:6–7).[840] The vision of the tongs is equivalent to the great vision seen by Moses of the burning bush which was not consumed (Exod. 3:2). Surely, everyone is aware that the Virgin Mother is both that burning bush and those

tongs, as she conceived the divine fire without being consumed by fire. An archangel also ministered at that conception, and through her he united Him who takes away the sins of the world with the human race, thoroughly cleansing us by this union.

37. She alone forms the boundary between created and uncreated nature, and no one can come to God except through her and the mediator born of her, and none of God's gifts can be bestowed on angels or men except through her. As in the case with lamps on earth constructed of glass or some other transparent material, it is impossible to look at the light or enjoy its rays except through the lamp, so it is beyond the reach of all to look upwards to God or be helped by Him to make progress in any direction, except through the Ever-Virgin, this God-bearing lamp who is truly radiant with divine brightness. "God is in the midst of her", it says, "she shall not be moved" (Ps. 46:5).

38. If God requites us according to the measure of our love for Him, and he who loves the Son is loved by Him and by His Father, and becomes in a mysterious way the dwelling of both, as they make their home and walk in his soul, as the Lord promised (John 14:23, *cf.* 2 Cor. 6:16), who could love Him more than His Mother? For not only was He her only Son, but she bore Him on her own without a spouse, so her parental love was naturally double, not being shared with a partner. But who could be more beloved to the only-begotten Son than His Mother, particularly as He came forth in an indescribable way from her in the last times, just as He had come forth from the Father alone before all ages? And how could the honour due to her not be multiplied many times over, and above the fitting disposition of a son, by Him who came down to fulfil the law? If the love of the Father and the Son is one, and the honour and union bestowed by Both also comes from the Spirit – Oh, the Virgin's graces past understanding! – she bears within her soul the whole uncreated Trinity, one person of which she conceived without seed in her womb, and because she remained Virgin, gave birth to Him free from the pangs of childbirth.[841]

39. Just as it was through her alone that He came to us, and "appeared on earth and lived among men" (Baruch 3:37), whereas previously He was invisible to all, so in the unending age that follows, any progress towards divine illumination, every revelation of the mysteries of the divine order, and every kind of spiritual gift is beyond the capacity of anyone, without her. Being the first to receive "the fulness of him that filleth all" (*cf.* Eph. 1:23), she brought Him within the grasp of all,

sharing with each according to his strength and in proportion to the measure of his purity. Thus she is both the treasury and the treasurer of the riches of the Godhead, and the highest ranks of cherubim look to her and trust in her. They, above all others, are seized with longing for her, as, more than all others, they long for the outpouring of light and the granting of indescribable divine graces which come through her. All the spiritual powers under them share in due measure in this holy love, and in divine illumination through her. After them, for us too, for all men and women, according to the extent of our dispassionate and holy longing for this Godlike Virgin, immaterial, unceasing love and utterly sincere desire will be followed by the state of divine illumination and its clarity.

40. It is an eternal law in heaven that the lesser shall share by means of the greater in what lies beyond being.[842] So, as the Virgin Mother is incomparably greater than all, as many as will share in God will do so through her, and as many as will know God will acknowledge her as the one who contained Him who cannot be contained, and as many as will extol God will hymn her, too, after Him. She is the reason for everything which preceded her, the protectress of everything which came after, and the cause of eternal blessings. She is the theme of the prophets, the starting-point of the apostles, the support of the martyrs, the foundation of teachers. She is the glory of those on earth, the delight of those in heaven, the adornment of the whole creation. She is the beginning, source and root of good things past telling, the summit and fulfilment of everything holy.

41. O Holy Virgin, how can I put everything about you into words? How can I express my desire? How can I glorify you, the treasure of glory? Just remembering you brings hallowing. A mere glance in your direction enlightens the mind, raising it instantly to divine heights. In you the eyes of our understanding become clear. In you our spirit is radiant with the presence of the divine Spirit. For you did not become the keeper and store of graces so as to have them for yourself, but to fill the universe with grace. For the person in charge of inexhaustible treasures oversees their distribution. Why would you shut away your wealth as it never diminishes? Share it abundantly with us, O Lady, and if we cannot contain it, enlarge our capacity, and then lavish it upon us. For you alone did not receive by measure, as all things were given into your hand.

42. May it be so. I think, however, that I should return to what I was saying and attempt to go on, if I may steal a glance into what lies within the sanctuary, bring it outside, extol it and expound it. May God assist me yet again. Because of the nature of speech, we are relying on something with very little power. The difficulties are many and great, and cannot be avoided, unless divine help from above is at hand. Let all of us who are followers of the ever-virgin Bride go forward, having prayed together that she would come to the aid of my words from the heavenly sanctuary where she now is. Let us enter the inner room, go together into the bridechamber and observe its secrets. For through her everything in heaven above and on earth below has been opened to us.

43. Let us see how types found fulfilment, how truth took perfect shape in the very place where it had been sketched out. She who is eternally the Holy of Holies entered the temporary Holy of Holies. The tabernacle, not made with hands, of the Word, the living human ark of the bread of life truly sent down to us from heaven, came into the place of the man-made ark, which contained the pot holding the manna (Heb. 9:4, *cf.* Exod. 16:31–34), which consisted of morning dew transformed by God's creative will into a type of food (*cf.* Num. 11:9). Because it came down from heaven, manna was called the bread of angels by those who were imperfect and uninitiated into truly divine mysteries,[843] but to those wise in divine matters, who possessed foresight through the Holy Spirit, it was seen as a type of the Truth which was to come to pass in this Virgin. The book of life, which in an indescribable way received the imprint, not of words, but of the Word of the Father Himself, came into the place which had the tables of the covenant engraved with the lifeless form of words. The evergreen plant which bore the unfading flower which bestows incorruption on us, entered the place where Aaron's rod was kept, which symbolized, by sprouting buds without moisture, the future birth from the Virgin without seed.

44. Almost the whole Temple was covered in gold (1 Kgs. 6:20–22), and that inviolable ark was overlaid with pure gold (Exod. 25:11), and shone brilliantly on every side. Surely, therefore, the Virgin's beauty must have been brighter still, as God Himself desired it. Or do you wish to see a sign from heaven that this was so? Golden figures of angels stood around the ark, overshadowing it (Exod. 25:18–20). But angels themselves, not statues, surrounded this true ark and, what is

more, they did not just keep watch but ministered to her, and served her with food. It is impossible to say what sort of nourishment it was,[844] but it was far more wonderful than that highly-praised manna or the sustenance brought to Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:6). This is shown by the Scriptural account itself. When manna had been formed by God's command, it was carried by the air and fell like snow from above. David, the divine minstrel, recalled it and sang, "Man did eat angels' food" (Ps. 78:25), but he foresaw that it prefigured the truly heavenly nourishment of the Virgin. Whereas the air brought the manna and gave it every morning, an angel came every day with the Virgin's food, as it was potent, full of mystery, proper to angels and akin to himself, and, naturally, as far superior to manna as angels are more excellent than air. As for Elijah, he was ministered to by a raven, a creature that hates children and is the symbol, they say, of lack of compassion for one's fellows.

45. The bringer of the Virgin's food is therefore a clear sign of her angelic way of life at this age. As was fitting, he continually served her without overshadowing her, and gave an indication of the great wonder that was to come to pass in her. It was not an angel that was to overshadow her, nor an archangel, nor even the cherubim and seraphim, but the power of the Highest in His very person (Luke 1:35).[845] And what is more, the power of the Highest did not converse with her through a whirlwind and cloud (*cf.* Job 38:1), nor through darkness and fire (Heb. 12:18), nor through a gentle breeze (*cf.* 1 Kgs. 19:12 LXX),[846] as happened at sundry times to others who were deemed worthy, but it directly overshadowed her virgin womb without any kind of disguise. There was nothing between the one overshadowing and the one overshadowed, not air, either earthly or heavenly, nor anything perceptible or beyond our perception. Obviously this was union, not overshadowing. But as anything that overshadows something else naturally imprints its own shape and form upon it, it was not merely a union which came about in the Virgin's womb, but the formation of something. And what took shape from both, from the power of the Most High and this Most Holy Lady's virginal womb, was the Word of God made flesh. Oh, to what mysterious depths have we descended in our sermon!

46. But let us bring our address back from there (for it is obviously beyond the scope of mortal men and their minds to go so deep) and take up again the theme we have before us. The Virgin entered the Holy of Holies. At once she looked around and, when she saw that

it pleased her, she felt it was a suitable place for her to stay. Through the beauty of what she saw, she immediately cast her mind's eye[847] to unseen beauties, and no longer counted anything on earth delightful. Having risen above the needs of human nature and the pleasures of the senses,[848] she decided that sights that are fair to look upon are not even worth seeing, and that things that are good to eat should be ignored. In this way, she was the first and only person to be shown to be in no danger from him who imposes his tyranny on us by these means, and in her turn she triumphed over him. She did not struggle with him just from morning until evening, nor just concerning the fruit of one plant (Gen. 3:2–9), but for the space of many years in respect of all the various pleasures invented by the powers of darkness as bait to catch souls. This holy Maid, alone of mankind, utterly despised all these delights while still an infant, and as a reward was rightly brought food from heaven by an angel, by which she was physically strengthened,[849] and which served as a testimony that her way of life was worthy of heaven. In fact, if I may say something highly fitting and appropriate to the dignity of the ever-virgin Bride, right from the beginning she was shown to be the Queen of heaven, as she had heavenly beings to wait upon her.

47. She lived, as though in paradise, in a place removed from the earth, or rather, as though in the courts of heaven, for that sanctuary was a symbol of those courts. Thus she led an unencumbered life without cares or occupation, free from sorrow, with no share in base passions, above that pleasure which is inseparable from pain.[850] She lived for God alone and was sustained and preserved only by Him who was to pitch His tent among us through her. Obviously she saw only God, making God her delight and continually waiting on Him.

48. With profound understanding she listened to the writings of Moses and the revelations of the other prophets when, every Saturday, all the people gathered outside, as the law ordained. She learnt about Adam and Eve and everything that happened to them: how they were brought out of non-being, settled in paradise, and given a commandment there; about the evil one's ruinous counsel, and the resulting theft; about their expulsion from paradise on that account, the loss of immortality,[851] and the change[852] to this way of life full of pain.[853] In addition, she saw that as time passed, life continued under the inherited curse and grew ever worse, God's creature made in His image was estranged from the Creator and became more and more

closely associated with the one who had evilly schemed to crush him. (Alas for the evil one's power over us and his insatiable rage against us! Woe to our insensitivity and our inclination to return to the earth!) No one was capable of putting an end to this impulse which brings destruction on all men alike, or to the uncheckable rush of our race towards hell. When the Holy Virgin Maid[854] heard and understood this, she was filled with pity for humanity and, with the aim of finding a remedy to counteract this great affliction, she resolved at once to turn with her whole mind to God. She took it upon herself to represent us,[855] to constrain Him who is above compulsion, and quickly draw Him towards us, that He might remove the curse from among us, halt the advance of the fire burning men's souls, weaken our enemies, answer our prayers, shine upon us with light that never sets and, having healed our sickness, unite His creature with Himself.

49. Having thought over these things so relevant to her, the Virgin full of grace interceded for all humanity in an amazing way defying description.[856] Seeking to converse persuasively and honestly with God, to whom she came as a self-appointed ambassador, or rather as one ordained by Him, she eagerly examined every type of virtue, those proclaimed in the law and those discovered by reason, and by men devoted to both. She considered every aspect of each of the principal branches of learning as though they were impressions left by a seal, her intention being to discover which was most akin to God and which had taken its imprint from Him and was therefore capable of impressing His image on its adherents, wiping out the marks made by material concerns. Since the Virgin recognized that nothing revealed by men before her time went this far, she inaugurated something better and more perfect. She invented, put into practice, and handed down to those who came after her, a practice higher than any vision, and a vision as far superior to that which was formerly so highly acclaimed as the truth is superior to imagination.

50. The greatness of this mystery can be briefly stated. I shall utter words which are beneficial to all Christians, but especially to those who have renounced the world. Through what I say you may be able to taste those good things to come, to stand with angels and become a citizen of heaven, since you wish to emulate as far as possible the ever-virgin Bride who was the first and only person to forsake the world from infancy for the world's sake. The goodness she practised while shut away encompassed every kind of virtue: all those which

had been discovered before her time and were openly bestowed on those men we have mentioned, and adorned their characters, and by means of which domestic and civic affairs were well managed. The other aspect of the Virgin, however, superior to what we have recounted, is entirely knowledge,[857] through which we may search out natural principles[858] and, as far as lies within our grasp, contemplate the analogies, figures and quantities of the soul and things which are inseparably separable from matter.[859]

51. Let us consider, from a theological and philosophical point of view,[860] things completely free from matter, a subject which the Greeks,[861] or rather the fathers and patrons of the art, called the first philosophy,[862] being unaware of any higher kind of contemplation.[863] Even this,[864] although it contains some truth, is as far removed from the vision of God, and as different from converse with Him, as possessing is distinct from knowing.[865] Saying something about God is not the same as encountering Him.[866] Speaking of God requires that you pronounce words, and perhaps that you have some skill with them, if you are not just to have knowledge but to make use of it and pass it on. It also requires all sorts of logical reasoning, compelling arguments and worldly examples, all or most of which are gathered by seeing and hearing,[867] and are the prerogative of people who spend their lives in this world. They may be acquired by the wise men of this present age, even though their lives and souls may not be completely pure.[868] It is absolutely impossible, however, to truly encounter God unless, in addition to being cleansed, we go outside, or rather, beyond ourselves, leaving behind everything perceptible to our senses, together with our ability to perceive, and being lifted up above thoughts, reason, and every kind of knowledge, above even the mind itself,[869] and wholly given over to the energy of spiritual perception,[870] which Solomon calls divine awareness (*cf.* Prov. 2:3–5 LXX),[871] we attain to that unknowing which lies beyond knowledge,[872] that is to say, above every kind of much-vaunted philosophy, even though the purpose of the most excellent part of philosophy is knowledge.[873]

52. Seeking after this – for it is absolutely necessary for ambassadors to meet those to whom they have been sent – the Virgin found that holy stillness was her guide: stillness, in which the mind and the world stand still (*cf.* Ps. 46:10),[874] forgetfulness of the things below, initiation into the things above, the laying aside of ideas for

something better. This is true activity,[875] a means of approaching contemplation or, to state it more aptly, the vision of God,[876] which is the only proof of a soul in good health.[877] Every other virtue is like healing medicine for the soul's illnesses and the evil passions which have put down roots in it through sloth. Contemplation, by contrast, is the fruit of a healthy soul; it aims to achieve a certain end and is of a kind that deifies; for it is through contemplation that a person is made divine,[878] not by speculative analogies on the basis of skilful reasoning and observations – perish the thought (for that would be something base and human) – but under the guidance of stillness. Continuing in our life's upper room, as it were, in prayers and supplications night and day (*cf.* Acts 1:13–14), in some way we touch that blessed nature that cannot be touched.[879]

53. Thus those whose hearts have been purified by holy stillness, inasmuch as they have been ineffably permeated by the light that transcends both sense and mind, see God within themselves as in a mirror (*cf.* 2 Cor. 3:18).[880] The immediate proof of this is the Virgin, who, having kept company with quietness from the earliest age, brings the greatest benefits to us, and commends to God those in need as no one else can. She alone lived in holy quiet from such early childhood in a manner surpassing nature, and she alone of the human race bore the Word, who is the God-man, without knowing man.[881]

54. We must, however, return to our subject in order to make this great principle easy for "those who have ears" to grasp (*cf.* Mark 4:23; 7:16). I admire that type of eulogy which benefits the hearers by revealing to them the way of salvation. And even if it is the case that some of the phrases are difficult to understand and cannot easily be comprehended by those whose minds lack concentration, I do not think such words should be banished from the holy precincts; for we do not avoid the narrow way which leads to life simply because it is difficult to follow (*cf.* Matt. 7:14).[882] Onward then, my brave companions, as many of you as do not prefer easily-earned dust to hard-won gold, and let each of you gather his mind within itself, just as men going along narrow passageways gather up their cloaks, and ascend intently towards the majesty of this thought;[883] for there is no accessible means of ascent to so highly exalted a meaning for those who creep along the ground. Once, however, you have lifted your minds above material concerns and resolved to meditate on

the Mother of God's divine way of life in the holy sanctuary, eager to understand something of what happened there and to emulate her as far as possible, then perhaps you will soon receive that blessed gift of those purified in heart (*cf.* Matt. 5:8), and invisibly observe the honours proper to the immortal world.

55. Man, the greater world contained in a lesser, is the combination of all things, the recapitulation of God's creation,[884] which is why he was produced last of all,[885] just as we put an epilogue at the end of speeches; in fact, you could say that this universe is the composition of the person of the Word Himself. Man, then, brings his mind and senses into unity with the greater wisdom of Him who is able to mingle elements that cannot be mixed, by using his imagination, opinion and thought as intermediaries, as genuine bonds of the extremes.[886] Something similar occurs with the four perceptible elements which make up the world around us: air mediates between fire and water, and water between air and earth, and thus opposites are bound together, and peace is established between conflicting elements, without them in any way losing their mutually repelling properties.[887] Thus it is with the world, which is great in size; thus it is with man, who is great in honour. In this way, man and the world are in communion with each other,[888] but whereas the world is greater than man in magnitude, man transcends it in intelligence.[889] He is stored up like treasure within the world, like a very precious object kept in a large house and worth much more than the building that contains it.[890] Or like many-coloured, costly royal robes (not like the king himself, for this honour has been lost)[891] within the palace, where the palace is made of stones which, though huge, can be bought cheaply by anyone, whereas royal robes are made with small but precious stones which are hard to come by.[892]

56. How much greater is the mind than the heavens![893] It is the image of God, knows God, and alone of everything on earth can, if it wishes, become God, exalting man's humble body at the same time.[894] How much more excellent are man's senses than the earth! They can comprehend not just the earth's dimensions, its bulk and its various qualities, but ascend through knowledge to the heavenly spheres, understand their various movements, be aware of all the various and perhaps significant ways in which stars come together and separate, and thus lay the foundation, as it were, for the science of astronomy. Even the things in between the heavens and the earth are worth less

than what lies on the boundary between man's mind and his senses, for although they serve the same purpose in our analogy, in context, they are as different as can be.[895] Man's senses are a non-rational power,[896] capable of knowing and comprehending perceptible objects when they are present. Imagination[897] has its starting point in the senses, but exercises its abilities even in the absence of objects which can be perceived by the senses. It could perhaps also be called mind, in so far as it can act without such objects;[898] although as not existing outside divisible things, it is passive.[899] Opinions originating from the imagination are irrational judgements,[900] but not those which come from reasoning;[901] for the ability to form opinions is natural to both. Man's reasoning is always logical, and comes eventually, by means of a gradual process,[902] to opinions in accordance with reason. All these mental powers were formed, and act, by means of the primary organ, man's natural spirit within the brain.[903] The mind, by contrast, has no organ, but is an essence complete in itself, able to operate independently, even though it lowers itself to the level of man's natural life which develops through reasoning.[904]

57. But why have I set out these divisions and distinctions now?[905] Why did I first enumerate the types of virtues, then afterwards the soul's powers? Because the seeds of those virtues come from these faculties, and their whole existence stems from them. Since, therefore, the divinely wise Virgin[906] could not reap from the virtues the closest possible relationship to God, she investigated the soul's capabilities, to see whether she might perhaps discover a means of attaining to oneness with Him.[907] Some of them she found to be completely irrational and incapable of rising above things perceptible to the senses. As for the capacity to form opinions and concepts, although these are rational powers, they are not detached from that storehouse of the senses, the imagination, and what is more they also function through the organ of man's natural spirit.[908] She prudently understood what the apostle, too, said later: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:14). She therefore looked for something higher, a truly spiritual life unadulterated with earthly concerns, and, in a way which goes beyond the limitations of created nature, she longed for God and heavenly union with Him.[909] Just as it is impossible to desire visible light without desiring the sun, so it was with her.

58. She found that the purest thing in us, the only perfect and indivisible essence that we have, is precisely intended by nature for this holy and divine love.[910] As the greatest power of the soul,[911] the mind defines and unifies even those processes of reason[912] upon which the things pertaining to the sciences are based,[913] which creep forward almost like reptiles, together or individually, making inferences and interpretations. Although the mind can come down to the level of human reasoning, and by it to a life full of complexities, since its energies are available for all, yet it indubitably has another, superior mode of operation, which it is capable of putting into action by itself. For it is able to remain on its own, either when separated from the body and the things pertaining to the body,[914] or when, although still bound to it, it is enabled, by means of diligence,[915] and assisted by divine grace,[916] to leave behind this varied, complex and lowly way of living.[917] It is like a rider, who is certainly capable of activity eminently superior to merely holding the reins, and could put it into effect on his own, not only if he were to dismount, but even on horseback or in a chariot, had he not deliberately devoted his entire attention simply to guiding the horse. In the same way, if the mind did not wholly revolve without ceasing around base concerns, it could be given over to superior, more exalted activity, namely, that which is proper to it, and which is the sole means by which it can enter into union with God.[918] This is, however, far more difficult, because it is by nature intertwined with the body, and entangled with material knowledge[919] and all the different ties that bind this life to earthly matters, and are hard to lay aside.

59. The all-pure Virgin threw off those ties from the very beginning of her life,[920] and withdrew from people. She escaped from a blameworthy way of life, and chose to live in solitude out of sight of all, inside the sanctuary.[921] There, having loosed every bond with material things, shaken off every tie and even risen above sympathy towards her own body,[922] she united her mind with its turning towards itself[923] and attention,[924] and with unceasing holy prayer.[925] Having become her own mistress by this means, and being established above the jumble of thoughts in all their different guises, and above absolutely every form of being, she constructed[926] a new and indescribable way to heaven, which I would call silence of the mind.[927] Intent upon this silence, she flew high above all created things, saw God's glory more clearly than Moses (*cf.* Exod. 33:18–23),[928] and beheld divine grace,[929] which is not at all within the capacity of men's senses,[930] but is a

gracious and holy sight for spotless souls and minds. Partaking of this vision, she became, according to the sacred hymnographers, a radiant cloud of the truly living water, the dawn of the mystical day, and the fiery chariot of the Word.[931]

60. Without the visitation of divine grace, even if a mind were to discover divine awareness (*cf.* Prov. 2:3–5 LXX),[932] it could not see anything or act on its own, just as the eye can do nothing without visible light. To those who are eternal,[933] that is to say, to those who are like God, He is nothing but light, and as the sun is to visible objects, so God is to what the mind perceives.[934] Man's sight, when it is in action, itself becomes light, communes with the light and sees with the light, and the first thing it beholds is this light poured out on everything visible. In exactly the same way, anyone fortunate enough to attain to the divine energy,[935] and to undergo divine transformation, himself becomes completely like the light, is with the light, and by means of the light sees clearly things which, were it not for this great and inexpressible grace, would be invisible to all; for it is beyond not only the bodily senses, but also everything that can be known by us, and indeed it is invisible even to those who surpass us in natural power.[936] According to the Lord's Beatitude, which cannot prove false, those whose hearts have been purified see God (Matt. 5:8), who, in the words of the great theologian, John, the son of thunder, is light (1 John 1:5), and dwells in, and reveals Himself to, those who love Him, and are loved by Him, in accordance with His own promise to them (*cf.* John 14:23). He appears to the purified mind as though in a mirror (*cf.* 2 Cor. 3:18),[937] although in Himself He is invisible. For such is the form reflected in a mirror: it appears but cannot be seen, and it is utterly impossible for anyone to see the reflection in the mirror and at the same time the object being reflected. This is how God is seen now by those cleansed by divine love, but then, it says, they shall see Him "face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12).

61. But who ever loved God more than she, whom we now praise? And who was ever loved by God more than she? What other creature could ever be purer than she, or equal to her in purity, or anywhere near as pure? For this reason, she alone of all mankind throughout the ages was initiated into the highest mysteries by these divine visions, was united in this way with God, and became like Him. She then accomplished the super-human rôle of intercessor on our behalf, and brought it to perfection through herself,[938] not just acquiring

the exaltation of mind that lies beyond reason,[939] but using it for the sake of us all, and achieving this great and surpassingly great deed by means of her boldness towards God. For she did not merely come to resemble God, but she also made God in the likeness of man, not just by persuading Him,[940] but by conceiving Him without seed and bearing Him in a way past telling. Having been fashioned by God through grace – which is why she was addressed as "thou that art full of grace" by the archangel[941] – she shaped God in human form – which is why she was given the good tidings with the greeting, "Rejoice" (Luke 1:28).

62. "Who shall tell of your mighty acts, O Virgin, or who can show forth all your praise, whose child is divine?"[942] (*cf.* Ps. 106:2). You became the Mother of God.[943] You have united the mind with God. You have joined God with flesh. You have made God the Son of man, and man the son of God. You have reconciled the world to the Creator of the world. By your deeds, you have taught us that visions do not come to those who are truly human through their senses alone, or even through their thoughts – for then they would be little better than beasts – but much more by means of the purification of the mind and by participation in divine grace,[944] through which we shall delight in the divine beauties, not by thoughts but by immaterial contact.[945]

63. You have enabled us, through our very senses, to see Him who is invisible in our own human form and shape, and, by touching matter, to touch the immaterial and intangible one. You gave human nourishment to Him who nurtures the angels. Through Him who provides for the angels you have fed us on the truly heavenly and incorruptible food. You have made men live the same life as angels, or rather, you have made them worthy of greater privileges,[946] in that you conceived, of the Holy Spirit, the theandric Form,[947] and mysteriously gave Him birth, linking man's nature to the divine nature and rendering it, as it were, equally divine (*cf.* Heb. 10:12), in inexpressible fashion.[948]

64. They say there was a king called Pious, and it seems he was named after his deeds. It is related of him that once, when those around him were suffering from thirst, he lifted up his just right hand to God, saying, "With this hand I entreat you, O giver of life, for with it I have never taken a life", and immediately rainclouds appeared overhead from the sky, and torrential rain fell.[949] The Virgin, however, the Queen of the truly pious, lifted up her mind in the Holy of Holies,

utterly withdrawn from everything below or, more accurately, never having been attached to such things at all, and, saying to God, "I beseech You with this mind, which nothing earthly has ever entered", made the whole world heaven. She did not call upon clouds, which have obeyed many people on numerous occasions through prayer, but upon Him who brings the clouds from the ends of the earth. She did not bring us temporary relief through rain, but brought us the Treasure of all goodness, the everlasting fount that springs without ceasing from the Father's bosom, the Word who is seated above the vaults of heaven. Thence He has brought us living water, and bestowed on us food which makes those who partake of it immortal and sons of God, not adopted merely in name, but in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit – O ineffable gift! – brought close to God and one to another through God's flesh and blood.

65. Let us therefore preserve this unity with God and one another, which has been divinely wrought within us by God through the ordinances of love. Let us always look to our heavenly Father. Let us forsake the world, for we are no longer of the earth, earthy, like the first man, but like the second man, the Lord, from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47). Let us lift up our hearts to Him.[950] Let us contemplate this magnificent spectacle, our nature dwelling eternally with the immaterial fire of the Godhead. And putting aside our coats of skins (*cf.* Gen. 3:21),[951] in which we were clothed as a result of transgression, let us stand in the holy place, each of us marking out his own holy ground through virtue and by turning unswervingly towards God, that, as God dwells in fire, we may have boldness to run towards Him and be enlightened and, once illumined, to live with Him in the glory of His sublime light, the radiance of three suns and one sovereignty.

66. To whom belong all glory, dominion, honour and worship, now and unto unceasing ages. Amen.

HOMILY FIFTY-FOUR

THAT AFTER THE LORD'S COMING THE UPRIGHT HAVE A GREATER REWARD AND THE DISOBEDIENT WORSE CONDEMNATION AND ABOUT VARIOUS PASSIONS AND VIRTUES

DELIVERED ON THE TENTH SUNDAY OF LUKE
THE ONE BEFORE THE SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS[952]

WHEREAS THE OLD LAW proclaimed that God was the Maker and Lord of heaven, and laid down God-pleasing ordinances for those under the law, it did not give any promise of heavenly benefits, nor did it offer communion with God, or an eternal, heavenly inheritance to those who obeyed it. But once Christ the King of all had visited us in the flesh "to call sinners", as He says Himself, "to repentance" (Matt. 9:13), there were greater rewards for those who obeyed and repented, and, through works of repentance, ordered their lives according to Christ's gospel, keeping the holy commandments it contains. Nor were these rewards simply greater, but also incomparably more excellent. For what was promised was the kingdom of heaven, light without evening, heavenly adoption as sons, celestial dwellings, and a divine and eternal way of life,[953] and even more than this: for we shall be "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), and "I am come", says the Lord, "that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly" (*cf.* John 10:10). These are not resounding but empty phrases, nor just a litany of vain words, but an account of the unchanging things actually stored up as prizes for those who believe and live according to Christ.

2. It is necessary for those who are to obtain these rewards in reality and truth, first to complete the contest, to fit themselves to inhabit heavenly mansions, and make themselves capable of receiving and containing the good things to be found there, lest they experience what is in fact worse, having lost what is better. It was fair and comes as no surprise that sinners were more easily tolerated before Christ's coming, and the commandments were less strict. Now, by contrast, for those who sin without repentance, a terrible judgment and eternal damnation are in store: unquenchable fire, outer darkness, the worm that never sleeps, the wretched gnashing of teeth, pain and tribulation and affliction, ceaseless and inconsolable mourning, and in addition, or rather before all these, continuous separation from God, which means alienation from everything good and truly delightful.

3. The fact that transgressors of the commandments of the law were more tolerable before the gospel teaching, whereas after the law there is a much more exacting requirement for those who are to attain to the promised rewards to keep the commandments of the gospel, is taught by the great Paul. "If", he says, "the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Heb. 2:2–4). Again he says elsewhere, "If we sin after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:26–27).

4. Let the Lord Himself also confirm this statement, by pronouncing wretched those cities in which most of His miracles took place, because they did not repent. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin!" He says, "Woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" (Matt. 11:21, Luke 10:13), adding that, "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha at the day of judgment, than for you" (Matt. 11:24, 10:15). But what does He say to us? "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). Prior to the Lord's coming even our oaths to God did not bring us condemnation, nor were we held accountable

under the law for anger or contempt towards others. Even looking passionately at someone else's wife was not reckoned as adultery, and having excessive possessions without sharing them with people in need did not mark us out as witting servants of mammon. Now, however, we shall have to answer for all such transgressions. Sincerity and exactness will be required of us not just in our deeds but in our words, and not just in our words but in our thoughts. For He says, "If thine eye", meaning your innermost thought,[954] "be evil, thy whole body shall be evil" (*cf.* Matt. 6:23). He uses the word "eye" in the singular to show that He is referring to the mind, for the body does not have just one eye.

5. He gives further proof of His meaning by going on to say, "Thy whole body shall be evil" (*cf.* Matt. 6:23). Given that there are two eyes in the body, if one of them cannot see, the whole body is not afflicted with blindness. Also by saying that it shall be evil, rather than that it shall suffer, He makes it clear that He is speaking about the sickness of passions within the soul when we sin. That is why He adds, "If the light that is in thee", namely, your mind and your understanding,[955] "be darkness, How great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23), meaning of the body and the senses.[956]

6. Indicating the cure for such secret ills,[957] He commands us to pray to "the Father which is in secret" (Matt. 6:6), to give alms in secret, and to cleanse rather the inside of the cup (*cf.* Matt. 23:26), which is our inner man. Then what comes out of our mouths will not soil or defile us (Matt. 15:11), but each of our words will be for our own sanctification and the edification of our hearers. And not only that, but in order to confirm matters where there is doubt, each of us should be ready with an affirmation of the facts,[958] as the Lord says elsewhere, "Let your yea be yea; your nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (*cf.* Matt. 5:37, Jas. 5:12).

7. Therefore brethren, may none of you cherish evil thoughts, siding with misjudgements, hatred, remembrance of wrongs and criticism of others rather than righteousness, love and truth. May no one pour filth, shameful thoughts, into the lamp of his heart instead of oil. May no one possess treasures on earth, burying or incarcerating his own mind together with them. May no one be ready with oaths, using his mouth to utter words from the evil one. For anyone who bears such things in his soul and brings them out through his mouth makes himself the habitation, tool and servant of the evil

one and cannot be God's servant, never mind a son and heir to His promised heavenly and eternal kingdom. How can a person attain to this kingdom if his thoughts, words and deeds are not those of the good Master but of the evil traitor?

8. Anyone who avoids oaths should not merely say "yes" or "no", but say it in all truthfulness, so that the facts are shown to accord with his words. In this way his "yes" will be "yes", and his "no" "no", as the gospel exhorts. For if what he says does not keep to the truth and the facts contradict his words, his "yes" will mean "no" and his "no" "yes", and again this will come from the devil, because it is a lie; for falsehood originates from the devil, and he is its father (*cf.* John 8:44), and liars become his and are adopted by him, and they have no share in the Spirit of truth, nor can they be members of the body of Christ. That is why the apostle writes to the Ephesians saying, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put ye on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" (Eph. 4:23–25).

9. What is the meaning of "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put ye on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:23–24)? When God created Adam our forefather after His image and likeness, He put no evil in him at all, but, together with his soul, breathed into him the grace of the Holy Spirit which kept him new and preserved his divine likeness. When, however, Adam committed the ultimate wrong, disobeying his Maker and obeying the envious devil, he came to an agreement with falsehood by accepting him who told lies against God's commandment. Once he fell from divine grace he became old and corrupted instead of new, and was no longer according to God, that is to say, after the likeness of his Creator, nor could he beget children who were like God, but only ones who were old and corrupted like himself; for growing old is associated with those who are about to perish.[959]

10. That is why we have a New Adam who never grows old,[960] "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22), and whom we now possess as Father and forefather, Father of the age to come and prince of eternal life.[961] He has taken away our sins and removed aging from our midst.[962] This is Christ Jesus the Son of God, clothed in flesh taken from the Virgin for our sake, the forefeast

of whose birth we have begun to celebrate today,[963] as we keep the commemoration of the Fathers who lived before and under the law, who shone forth on account of their virtue and godliness. Theirs were the prophecies and to them were the promises given, and from among them Christ was descended according to the flesh. He was born as we are, but of a Virgin, that He might re-create us from what is our own, and, through holy baptism, renew us and make us once more capable of containing the grace of the divine Spirit, clothing in righteousness and true holiness the man created after God in Himself.[964] He accomplished this righteousness and holiness in His own person,[965] putting the evil one finally to shame, in spite of all sorts of attacks, rightly obeying His Father to the end and showing that obedience to Him procures resurrection and true life.

11. Having fulfilled these virtues in Himself, He gave them to us to keep. "For the law", it says, "was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). By keeping them, we shall receive a new body above corruption in the age to come, and in the present we are renewed in the spirit of our mind[966] through concord and union with Him,[967] making progress for the better day by day. When He brought us to new birth through Himself, He did not separate us from Himself, for He has borne us according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh. And just as in His divine nature He was begotten of the Father before all ages, and continues undivided from His Father and His Spirit, so too does He will that we who have been brought to birth by grace in the last ages should be inseparable both from one another and from Himself. The Lord gave proof of this by saying of His disciples to the Father, "Grant that they all may be one; as I, Father, am in thee, and thou in me, that they also may truly be one" (*cf.* John 17:21).

12. For this reason Paul says elsewhere that the Lord is our Head and we are members one of another (*cf.* 1 Cor. 11:3, Rom. 12:5, Eph. 1:22). In the same passage (Eph. 4:23–25), having said "Put on the new man", he continues, "speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another". What he is actually saying is that, just as our eye, being part of our body, does not inform us that light is darkness or darkness light, and just as our tongue, as one of our members, does not tell us that something sweet is bitter, or something bitter is sweet, but each thing is shown to us exactly as it really is by those of our organs

capable of discerning it, so it is also that each one of us who is called after Christ, being a member of the whole Church,[968] should state nothing other than what is really so and what he actually knows. Otherwise he is a deceiver and an opponent, not a member belonging to Christ.[969]

13. We have also heard the Lord saying of anger, "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matt. 5:22). These things may seem trivial, but they shake and destroy the great matter of love and give the devil an opportunity. "Let not the sun", it says, "go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:26–27). Anyone, therefore, who, through intense and prolonged anger, reaches the point of insulting his brother, and has no inclination to be reconciled, has fallen away from the light of love and been filled with its opposite darkness. He makes room for the ruler of darkness and has him, as it were, dwelling within him. Such a person is held now in the same place as the devil and will obviously fall with him into the hell prepared for him (*cf.* Matt. 25:41), since he is guilty and accountable, unless, by means of repentance, he throws out, together with hatred towards his brother, the prince and leader of hatred.

14. Brethren, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice" (Eph. 4:31). For if saying angrily that someone is a fool is judged worthy of such great condemnation, what shall we say about the other insults and blasphemies to which we resort when anger gets the better of us? We should therefore, brethren, make haste to strangle that terrible beast, our anger, and bridle our tongues, because whenever we give way to them we do so to the detriment, not of those we hate, but of our own souls. If anyone utters that forbidden word in anger and calls a fool someone who, for the sake of godliness, has joined a brotherhood,[970] let him tremble at the Lord's sentence and not allow his rage to reach that point. However, even if such words are not spoken out of anger, they are still not blameless. For it says, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. 4:29). "But fornication, and covetousness, and all uncleanness, let it not

be even named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not fitting" (Eph. 5:3–4).

15. What does "not be even named" mean? He does not reckon it a crime for someone to be named a fornicator by others, because it is not within our power to prevent this happening, and it is obviously not someone's fault if he is ill spoken of. Elsewhere the apostle indicates that it is not disgusting to be called immoral, only to be so, "If any man that is called a fornicator be so, with such an one not even to eat" (*cf.* 1 Cor. 5:11). So in this passage he does not tell us to be careful not to be given such a name, but to take heed lest our tongues utter words which give rise to uncleanness. That is why he goes on to add, "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not fitting" (Eph. 5:4). To whom are they inappropriate? To the saints whom he mentioned earlier. For when he said, "All uncleanness, let it not be even named among you", meaning, may it not be spoken by you, he continued, "as becometh saints" (Eph. 5:3). Here "saints" does not refer to those who, having departed from among men and being now with the angels, are glorified by us because they were entirely well-pleasing to God, and finished their lives with a noble end acceptable to God, but to all those who have been committed to God through baptism in Christ.[971] If vessels dedicated to God are holy, as is every offering to Him, especially anything offered for sanctification, how much more holy is a person who has been presented to God through a holy covenant, and whom He has taken to Himself through the washing of regeneration, for from that source he has obtained the grace of the Spirit's hallowing.

16. But what agreements and promises did we make such that we were taken hold of by the grace of the Spirit from on high? To put it concisely, we clearly promised to renounce Satan and to side with Christ and be obedient to Him, who said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Luke 13:24, Matt. 7:13–14). No man clad in the bulky garment of vainglory and pride can go through the narrow gate, nor anyone laden with the burden of greed or love of possessions, nor anyone made dissolute by pleasure and self-indulgence. That is why jesting and wit are not appropriate for Christians,

because they bring dissipation to the soul. Nor is foolish chatter, as it is a sign of pride; nor foul speech, because it provides fuel and encouragement for fornication. "But rather", as Paul goes on to say, "giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:4).

17. The statement that filthiness and jocularity are not fitting for saints, whereas thanksgiving is, may seem inconsequent. In fact, however, the words follow a very logical order. Since here he is calling saints those hallowed through the grace of baptism in Christ,[972] the precise meaning of what he is telling us is this. As we have freely received such great grace, it does not befit us to occupy ourselves with anything other than thanking Him who bestowed this magnificent gift, and who not only provided it but gave it as the pledge of our eternal inheritance (*cf.* Eph. 1:13–14), if, that is, we hold firm this pledge to the end through good works.

18. This is why Christ says in the Gospels, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with pleasures and cares of this life" (*cf.* Luke 21:34). "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming", and begins to be aggressive and indifferent, "the lord shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder" – that is, cut him off from the grace he had been given – "and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites" (Matt. 24:48–51), who pretend to be Christians and bear the name, but are not really so. The great Paul, aware of this, continues with affirmations and exhortations, writing, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them" (Eph. 5:5–7).

19. On the one hand, Paul's words and opinions seem harsh, because in this passage he characterizes as immoral those who are impure, who jest and whose conversation is shameless, and excludes them from any inheritance in Christ. The Lord, however, imposed an even heavier sentence when He gave us His laws. For He gives the name of adultery to that desire within the soul which comes of a curious glance, in order that we might cleanse ourselves even from mental defilements and live like angels on earth. This is why, while remaining in heaven as God, He came down to us, so that He might lead us up to heaven through an

angelic way of life, even while we still stay on earth. Again, this is the reason that Paul says, “For our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20); “Wither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus” (Heb. 6:20).

20. May it be that we, too, who follow Him, now by leading lives pleasing to God, and in the future age by beholding the promised, ineffable and eternal good things, shall be united with Him and become coeternal with Him, together with holy angels and men, glorifying Him with the Father and Spirit now and ever and unto endless ages. Amen.

HOMILY FIFTY-FIVE

DELIVERED ON THE SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS[973]

ALSO CONCERNING THOSE WHO ARE INDIFFERENT ABOUT LISTENING TO INSTRUCTION BECAUSE TIMES ARE HARD AND THEY LACK PHYSICAL NECESSITIES

WHEN THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN Son of God took flesh for us of the Virgin and, through His way of life in the flesh, fulfilled the law given by Moses (*cf.* Matt. 5:17, Rom. 10:4), perfected the law of grace and transformed that old law for our Church, the Hebrew race was expelled from the sacred congregation[974] and we were brought in instead, the elect from among the Gentiles, whom the Lord unites with Himself and the Father. He adopts us as true sons and brothers, and – O ineffable love for mankind! – even as His parents. "For whosoever", he says, "shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12:50).

2. In church today, however, we celebrate the forefathers, most of whom were Hebrews by race. For what reason? So that all of us may learn that the Hebrews were not disinherited nor the Gentiles adopted as sons in a way that was unjust, unreasonable or unworthy of God who did these things and made these changes. Rather, just as among those Gentiles who were called, only the obedient were chosen for kinship with God, so the race of Israel, and Adam's descendants down to Israel's time, were a great multitude, but only those among them who lived according to God's will were true Israelites. To them the prophecies belonged, through them future events were prefigured, and to them the promises were given (*cf.* Rom. 3:1–4:13). Only

these men were the true fathers and forefathers, firstly of her who in virginity bore Christ, who is God over all (Rom. 9:5), according to the flesh, and then, through Him, of ourselves. These fathers and forefathers were certainly not cast out of Christ's Church, for they are publicly[975] commemorated by us today as partakers of the fullness of the saints.[976] For in Christ Jesus there is neither old nor new, "nor Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all" (Col. 3:11, *cf.* Gal. 3:28). In Him there is no Jew, which is one merely outwardly, neither is there any circumcision, which is outward, but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter of the law (Rom. 2:28–29). All, old and new, who have been well-pleasing to God, and all who have led lives acceptable to God, either before the law, under the law or after the law in the gospel of grace, have this circumcision and are united by it (*cf.* Rom. 4:10–12, Phil. 3:3, Col. 2:11).

3. If you look at God's dispensation for the human race with understanding,[977] you will see that from beginning to end it is inwardly consistent and follows a logical order. It is now the case that the elect from every nation receive a new name as Christians, but those who are fruitless[978] are rejected, "For many be called, but few chosen", as the Lord Himself says (Matt. 20:16). And it was the same with those who lived in ancient times and those of the Jewish nation who came after them. Of those people who received new names, only the elect were accepted, whereas the mass of unprofitable[979] people among them were cast out. Of Seth's descendants, who were called the sons of God (*cf.* Gen. 6:2), those who were seized with mad desire for the daughters of men were, according to the Scripture, disinherited (*cf.* Gen. 6:3). The unprofitable majority among the Jews were not the proselytes, but those who were born Jewish, and were even legitimate sons, after the flesh, of Jacob, the first to bear the name of Israel (Gen. 32:28),[980] yet were disobedient like Esau (*cf.* Gen. 26:34–35). Even Absalom, the son of the prophet and king David, their first ruler after Saul, was a stranger to the sacred race because he sought to kill his father (*cf.* 2 Sam. 16:8–11, 17:1ff).

4. In the same way, not all of us who are called after Christ, as they were after Israel, will be reckoned as belonging to the Christian race (*cf.* 1 Pet. 2:9),[981] but only those who live according to His will, keep His commandments, and make up for their shortcomings with repentance. Judas Iscariot was not just one of those called, but one of the apostles, and not merely one of the apostles, but one of the

company of the twelve chief apostles. But he was estranged from kinship with Christ and became of all men the most alienated from the name of Christ. Why? Because he did not hasten towards the kingdom of heaven that was being proclaimed, nor did he regard the extraordinary deeds and teaching of the Saviour. For when God's signs and works are understood, they lead those with the desire for knowledge of them to faith, and listening to holy instruction inspired by the truth that is in God reveals the way of life pleasing to God. With the help of both the miracles and the teaching, we can learn to despise bodily and earthly concerns, and lift up our minds to the hope laid up in heaven.

5. Judas, however, had no desire for these things, but looked towards the earth and theft, to earthly and detestable gains, and to the advantages he anticipated receiving from them for his flesh. He was a lover of what had been forbidden on many occasions and in many ways by the Father, Lord and Teacher of all. His kinship was not with Christ, nor with his fellow apostles at the time, but with those to whom the Lord had said, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (John 6:26). Having seen the miracles, eaten the bread, and heard the words of the enhypostatic Word made man for our sake,[982] those people shouted to Pilate, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him" (John 19:15). In exactly the same way Judas, too, after seeing the Lord's majesty and divinity with his own eyes, and having more experience of it than others, handed Him over to those who sought to murder Him. But Christ was patient "unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8) – O inexpressible forbearance! – and in addition to triumphing over the prince of evil, He guides us towards patience and shows us that temptations and afflictions are for our good. "In affliction have we remembered thee", says the Scripture (*cf.* Isa. 26:16 Lxx), and "I will bear the correction of the Lord" (*cf.* Mic. 7:9), and "Thy correction hath lifted me up" (*cf.* Ps. 18:35 Lxx), that is to say, When I was bending down towards my body and its concerns, Your chastening raised me up and persuaded me to look towards You alone.

6. If, however, you do not run to God in times of trouble, and are not raised up by His correction, what other occasion, what else in existence or among creatures[983] will serve to restore you? You may say that our bodies must have physical nourishment and other necessities. But of course; who can deny that? If you have these things in abundance,

you obviously received them from God – "For what hast thou", asks the Scripture, "that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7) – so give thanks to the giver, express your gratitude through your actions. As He took your will into account and fulfilled your desire, so you too should draw near, heed His will, learn it thoroughly, obey it and put it into practice, that you may be praised for your wisdom: "Whosoever heareth", says the Lord, "these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man" (Matt. 7:24). From then on you will have Him as your generous benefactor, not only in respect of earthly, perishable goods, but also with regard to future heavenly gifts that endure. "Well done", He says, "thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:21). If, on the other hand, you do not have an abundance now of what your body needs, or fear that poverty lies ahead, again you should approach Him, again you should entreat Him, again you should obey Him. Because it says, "Obey the Lord and beseech him" (Ps. 37:7 LXX). Again therefore show yourself a good servant of His through your deeds. For He it is, according to the Psalms, "Who giveth them their meat in due season. Who openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing" (*cf.* Ps. 145:15–16). He says, "I shall not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (*cf.* Deut. 31:6), and "Behold, my servants shall eat", but He tells those who do not serve Him, "Ye shall be hungry" (Isa. 65:13).

7. Why do you imitate irrational animals in what is harmful to you, by stooping down towards your stomach and not looking up from earthly concerns, even though you were created upright, so that you might set your mind on heavenly things and seek what is above?[984] Why do you want to be bound like that woman who was bent over because Satan had bound her for eighteen years (Luke 13:11–16), even though the Word of life (*cf.* 1 John 1:1) who released her can easily set you free and wishes to do so? Provided only that you run to Him, listen to Him and obey Him, and do not stop your ears, turn away or rebel.

8. Why do you copy brute beasts in this characteristic of theirs which is damaging to you, but not in what is to your advantage? Listen to the prophet saying that even lion cubs howl when they need food, and ask God for it and receive prey: "The young lions", he says, "roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God" (Ps. 104:21). By referring to lion cubs, he leaves those with understanding to deduce that this applies even more to other animals. For if lions, the most

voracious, predatory and powerful of beasts, only have an abundance of prey when God gives it, what shall we say of other creatures? Christ, too, makes this same point in the gospel with regard to birds, saying, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them" (Matt. 6:26). But why confine myself to animals on dry land, in the air, the sea, or even amphibians? If God, it says, so cares for and so decoratively and magnificently clothes "the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, and which neither toils nor spins; shall he not much more clothe and feed you, O ye of little faith?" (*cf.* Matt. 28–30).

9. Brethren, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness", and not only will you be justified by His grace and become heirs of this perpetual[985] kingdom of God for ever, but also, "all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). If, however, you do not seek God's kingdom and righteousness as a priority, but only those things which sustain this unstable body,[986] you will not receive even what you seek, unless it be for the increase of your body's suffering and the eternal condemnation and loss of your soul.

10. This is demonstrated by the rich man who heard Abraham telling him, "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things" (Luke 16:25). Also, there was a time when the Jewish people wanted to eat meat in the wilderness, and God gave them quails in countless numbers (Num. 11:4, 31–33). "And they did eat, and were well filled: and he gave them their own desire. But while", it says, "their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew them in their masses, and bound the chosen men of Israel hand and foot" (*cf.* Ps. 78:29–31 LXX). Why did God's wrath strike them down "in their masses", that is, kill large numbers of the multitude? On account of the fact that they complained against God and Moses, their leader appointed by God, and spoke against them. But why did He bind the chosen men of Israel? Because they did not restrain the multitude as they sank from bad to worse. Such men are driven out of the sacred congregation and God's kingdom, whether they belong to the Old or New people of Israel. The Lord, too, points this out, saying in the gospels, "Many shall come from the east and the west and the north,[987] and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness" (*cf.* Matt. 8:11–12).

11. Who are those children of the kingdom expelled into darkness? Those who confess the faith, but deny God with their works, "being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). Who are those who sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the heavenly kingdom? Those who, with sincere faith, order their lives according to the law and the teaching of the Spirit, and demonstrate their faith through their works.

12. If anyone wishes to be classed with the latter, delivered from outer darkness, deemed worthy of the unfading light of God's kingdom and to live for ever at rest with the saints in heaven, let him put off the old man, who is corrupt with deceitful lusts (*cf.* Eph. 4:22), these being drunkenness, fornication, adultery, impurity, covetousness, love of money, hatred, anger, slander and every evil passion. And through his deeds let him put on the new man renewed in the image of his Creator (*cf.* Col. 3:10), in which is charity, brotherly love, purity, self-control and every type of virtue. Through these Christ dwells within us, reconciling us with Himself and one another, to His glory and the glory of His Father without beginning, and of the co-eternal, life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FIFTY-SIX

ON THE HOLY AND DREAD MYSTERIES OF CHRIST

DELIVERED FOUR DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS[988]

THE WORD which brings about the salvation of our souls is analogous to seed. Just as farmers first cultivate the earth with the plough, then sow seed, so must we prepare ourselves beforehand to accept the heavenly seed, by which I mean the word of spiritual teaching. But we are not inanimate, unfeeling earth which is cultivated and sown by others, but living, breathing, rational ground. For that reason we must make ourselves ready by means of repentance. To give you an indication of the starting point of repentance and the cultivation of the soul, it is what those who approached John's baptism did on their own initiative: "They went out", it says, "and were baptized in Jordan, confessing their sins" (*cf.* Matt. 3:5–6, Mark 1:5).

2. The confession of sins is the beginning of this cultivation, the start, that is, of repentance and preparation to accept within us the saving seed, the word of God, which is able to save our souls. Ploughing the ground was devised by farmers as a means of extracting wild roots from deep down in the earth, and rendering it capable of receiving our seeds and plants. Confession does exactly this for the reasonable field, our heart. It digs up the evil passions concealed within it and throws them out, making it ready to take in the sacred seeds and suitable to grow a fine harvest of virtues. Just as, after Adam's transgression, the earth began to bring forth thistles, thorns, and other useless plants (Gen. 3:18), so man's heart bears shameful and evil passions and thoughts, and the sins which they in turn produce.

3. This is the reason, brethren, why it is necessary for each of you to have a spiritual father,[989] to approach him with faith, humble himself before him and declare the evil passions of his heart. Accepting spiritual therapy,[990] he must cast out from his soul by the roots those thorns and thistles of sin which each of you has nourished within him through a pleasure-loving life in the grip of passions, and so open his ears to the Spirit's teaching and be persuaded by what we preach and put forward to you for the good of all, and be reconciled, through the absolution and blessing he receives from us, with Him who bowed the heavens and came down on account of the boundless ocean of His love for mankind, and cast words of life and saving seeds into the hearts of those who obeyed Him. Let none of you shun this starting-point of repentance. How can you go forward and make progress for the better from now on, if you have not even grasped the very beginning of virtues?

4. It is especially necessary for you to have to do this now. For this period of forty days[991] was given to us by the God-bearing Fathers as a means of purifying ourselves beforehand, because it leads up to the yearly celebration of the nativity in the flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, when it is customary for almost[992] all Christians to partake of His holy body and blood, to be united through them with Him, and to become one spirit and one body with Him in a divine way. If, as my words have already shown and will go on to prove further, without confession and the repentance which goes with it, no one is worthy to receive even divine utterances, how can anybody take the body and blood of Christ into himself unless he has been cleansed beforehand through confession and repentance in proportion to his sins? For this reason the great Paul protests and exhorts, saying, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11:28–29), not recognizing that this sinless body will not consent to dwell in a body indulging in sins.

5. For if a man cannot lift up his hands to Christ and pray unless they are unsoiled by sin, and he has first rejected all hatred and the disputes it causes (as Paul again makes clear, saying, "I will therefore that ye pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and quarreling", *cf.* 1 Tim. 2:8); and if we lack boldness towards God because we do not have a clear conscience (as Christ's beloved

theologian says: "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God", 1 John 3:21), how shall we have God with us and become one body with Him unless we have earlier laid aside our sins through confession and cleansed away the dirt left by them in our soul, by means of almsgiving, purity, self-control, prayer, contrition and the other works of repentance? God does not accept your gift unless both you and it are pure – as God originally showed us through Cain, by not heeding his gifts and telling him, "No; if thou offerest them correctly, yet hast thou not divided them aright" (Gen. 4:7 LXX); then through the old law by forbidding a prostitute's earnings to be brought into the house of God (Deut. 23:18); and later through the Gospel, saying: "First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:24). So can it be that He will give you His own great gift of His body without you having first been purified by confession and repentance? What do you say? God does not even wish His statutes to be spoken by an impure mouth. "Unto the wicked", says the Scripture, "God saith, What right hast thou to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" (Ps. 50:16). If He does not permit His covenant to be taken into an unclean mouth, will He give His own body into such a mouth?

6. Therefore, brethren, let us purify ourselves beforehand in body, mouth and mind,[993] and let us approach with a good and clear conscience. When coppersmiths and goldsmiths plate copper with gold, silver or some other precious metal and are about to overlay the copper with a bright surface, first they scrape off the dirt and make it clean. So how much more ought we, who are going to be made golden in a far better way, to cleanse ourselves beforehand from all defilement of flesh and spirit? For we do not shine merely on the surface, like plated copper, but everywhere within. Let us draw near after we have washed away even those stains in the depths of our soul. Then we shall also draw near to salvation.

7. If, however, we come with a bad conscience, without having yet obtained forgiveness by means of confession from him who has received power to loose and remit sins,[994] and before we have returned to God, or been put on the right path by the prescriptions of the Church,[995] then surely we shall do so to our own condemnation and eternal punishment, driving away God's mercy and His forbearance towards us. "Who hath trodden", says the Scripture, "under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant ... an unholy

thing, and hath done despite[996] unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:29). A person who tears the royal purple robe and someone who buries it in filth will clearly be subject to the same judgment, and anyone who pours perfume on to mud has committed the same evil as someone who encloses it in a stinking container. The divine gift is unaffected, for it is not subject to suffering,[997] but it invisibly flies away from us because "Fragrant ointment is not entrusted to a rotten vessel".[998] What it would have suffered, had it been capable of suffering,[999] through being spoilt, will be undergone by the man who has unworthily taken it to himself.

8. Let us make ourselves worthy through repentance, or rather, let us offer ourselves through works of repentance to Him who is able to render the unworthy worthy. In this way, let us approach with steadfast hope and faith, not simply beholding what is visible, but things unseen. For this bread is like a veil concealing the Godhead within. In proof of this the divine Paul says, "A new and living way hath he consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (Heb. 10:20), and by this means our citizenship is transferred to heaven – for that is where this bread is – and we enter into the true Holy of Holies through the offering of the body of Christ in purity. So, "Let us draw near", brethren, "with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:22).

9. Mysteries are so called because they are not simply something visible, but something spiritual and inexpressible. In accordance with the Lord's words, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63), if you only look at the appearance, it will be of no benefit to you, but if you look to the spirit, that is to say, if you behold spiritually this bread set before you, you will be made alive by partaking in it. For this is "the meat which perisheth not, but which endureth unto everlasting life; the true bread which cometh down from heaven, the living bread which giveth life unto the world" (*cf.* John 6:27, 32–33, 51). Anyone who does not eat this bread will not live, but he who eats "shall live for ever" (John 6:51), and shall not only be resurrected, but also delivered from damnation and obtain an everlasting kingdom. The Lord did not speak to His disciples about this bread only at the Last Supper, but earlier, when He was teaching in the synagogue, He clearly proclaimed, "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). Again

He declared, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life" (John 6:53–54). How amazing! What great love has God abundantly poured out upon us! He has given us new birth in the Spirit and we have become one spirit with Him, as Paul says, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17).

10. In order that we might be one with Him not just in spirit but in body, flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones (*cf.* Gen. 2:23), He granted us union with Himself through this bread. Every love finds fulfilment through unity, and starts from likeness. The popular adage "Like attracts like" is an ancient one.[1000] The love associated with the married state seems somehow superior to other forms of love. "For this cause", it says, "shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh" (Matt. 19:5). "This is a great mystery", says the divine Paul, "but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). It says in that same passage that a man shall cleave and become one flesh, but not one spirit. We, by contrast, shall not only be joined to Christ's body but mingled with it through partaking in this divine bread, and we shall not just become one body, but also one spirit. Do you see that the surpassing greatness of God's love towards us comes about, and is manifested, through sharing this bread and this cup? For this reason "Burnt offering and sin offering hath he not required", according to the Psalms, "But he hath prepared a body for us" (*cf.* Ps. 40:6 LXX).

11. O how manifold and ineffable this communion! Christ became our brother, partaking of the same flesh and blood with us,[1001] and through them became like us. Through this blood He has redeemed us for Himself as true servants. He has made us His friends (*cf.* John 15:14–15) by bestowing upon us the revelation of these mysteries. Through the partaking of this blood He has bound and betrothed us to Himself as a bridegroom his bride, and become one flesh with us. But He has also become our Father through holy baptism in His name, and nourishes us with His own breasts as a loving mother feeds her babies. And what is even better and more wondrous still,[1002] He feeds us not only with blood instead of milk, but with His own body, and not only His body but also His Spirit. In so doing, He always preserves undiminished the nobility given to us by Him, leads us towards greater longing, and grants us to fulfil our desire, not only to see Him but also to touch Him, to delight in Him, to take Him into our hearts, and for each of us to hold Him in our inmost

selves. Come, He says, those of you who have set your heart on eternal life, eat My body and drink My blood (*cf.* John 6:53), that you may not only be in God's image, but, by clothing yourselves in Me, the King and God of heaven, you may be eternal and heavenly gods and kings, feared by demons, admired by angels, beloved sons of the celestial Father, living for ever, fairer than the children of men (*cf.* Ps. 45:2), a delightful dwelling-place for the sublime Trinity.

12. If but the symbol of this body made Abraham righteous (Gen. 14:18–19; 15:6; 22:2–19), if just the token of this blood kept alive the firstborn of Israel in Egypt (Exod. 12:23), if merely the type prefiguring this blood consecrated God's ancient tabernacle, cleansed and hallowed even the Holy of Holies, made known the place where the divine Name dwelt on earth, and created priests, high priests and anointed men of God (Lev. 8:15, 19, Heb. 9:21–22, *cf.* Exod. 40:9–15); if just the symbol did all this, is there anything the reality will not achieve? Aaron did not enter the sanctuary[1003] without the symbolic blood, and unless we share in this reality the heavenly sanctuary will not be accessible to us, nor shall we have anywhere to stay in heaven, nor shall we be an abode for the God of heaven, nor a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (*cf.* Rom. 12:1). For through Him alone shall we be admitted. "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to destruction?" asks David, the prophet among kings (Ps. 30:9 LXX).

13. Let us therefore mingle our blood with God's, in order to remove the corruption[1004] from our own, for in this blood there is great benefit past telling. It makes us new instead of old and eternal instead of temporary; it frees us from death and makes us like evergreen trees planted by the rivers of the water of the divine Spirit (*cf.* Ps. 1:3), from which is gathered fruit unto life eternal (John 4:36). A spring welled up from paradise (*cf.* Gen. 2:10), a natural one,[1005] which sent forth natural rivers[1006] and watered the face of the earth, while from this sacred table, which, according to the psalm, Christ prepared for us in the presence of His enemies (*cf.* Ps. 23:5), the demons and passions, a spring wells up giving rise to spiritual fountains,[1007] letting souls drink and leading them up to heaven. It turns the angels' faces towards its beauty, and in it is discerned the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10), causing them to desire to look into (1 Pet. 1:12) the gifts bestowed upon us through this blood. When we approach these mysteries we become a royal purple robe or, rather, the blood and body of the King and – O marvellous wonder! – we are transformed to receive divine

sonship, as God's radiance comes upon us in secret, shines round about us in an extraordinary way, makes us God's anointed ones, and gives us power, according to the promise, to shine as the sun in the presence of the Father (*cf.* Matt. 13:43), provided only that no stain lingering in the soul of the person drawing near stands in the way.

14. For this reason not only should we cleanse ourselves before we approach, but also, after receiving this divine gift, we should pay heed to ourselves and be very much on our guard, that we might stay aloof from the passions and proclaim the virtues of Him who has graciously deigned to dwell in us on account of the likeness to Him in virtues which has come to light within us. Let us consider with whom we have been united and what blessings we have been vouchsafed and, amazed at the surpassing greatness of God's gift and of His love for us, let us order our actions, words and thoughts according to "the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). For this is the blood of the New Testament (Matt. 26:28), which establishes that new covenant, namely, the gospel of Christ. "For a testament", it says, "is of force after men are dead" (Heb. 9:17). When we partake of the blood of Christ's covenant, let us not make it uncertain through our works, lest we suffer judgment and eternal punishment, having counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing,[1008] with which we were sanctified (*cf.* Heb. 10:29). Just as there is a great promise for those who keep the hallowing that comes from communion[1009] (for they are promised the kingdom of God) so there is also a severe punishment for those who make themselves useless after receiving the gift (*cf.* Heb. 10:29).[1010] For if, it says, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy according to the law: of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (*cf.* Heb. 10:28–29).

15. But let us, I beseech you, brethren, preserve the grace of God undiminished in ourselves, putting all our efforts into obedience, into fulfilling the holy commandments and into offering ourselves to God through our actions, since He gave Himself for our sake. For the Father gave His only-begotten Son for us, and the only-begotten Son of God gave Himself. Shall we not then give ourselves in exchange, not for His sake but for our own? But how are we to give ourselves for our own sake to Christ who gave Himself for us? If we embrace love towards Him and one another. If we humble ourselves under

the mighty hand of God (1 Pet. 5:6) and, for His sake, are humble towards ourselves and our fellows, "Minding not high things, but condescending to men of low estate" (Rom. 12:16). If, as far as we can, we crucify the flesh "with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). If we "mortify our members which are upon the earth; drunkenness, fornication, uncleanness, covetousness" (*cf.* Col. 3:5), and every evil passion. If we die to sin and live to virtue.

16. These things are taught us by the crucified body of Christ set before us as food. For at the same time as being nourished by Him, we are also taught to share in His virtues and His sufferings, that we may live and reign with Him for ever. He announced this beforehand through the prophet David, saying, "The sacrifice of praise will glorify me, and there I shall show him the way of my salvation" (*cf.* Ps. 50:23 LXX). The service we perform in remembrance of what He has done for us is a sacrifice of thanksgiving, honour and praise to Him. And as the body and blood of Christ is truly set before us, and speaks to God the Father in a much more excellent manner than did the blood of Abel – for Abel's blood cried to God against his brother (Gen. 4:10), whereas the blood of Christ speaks on behalf of us, whose brother Christ deigned to become, propitiating God for us and reconciling us to the Father on high – and this blood also speaks to us, clearly showing us the way of love, because He, for love of us, emptied Himself until He was like us, laid down His life for us and taught us the way of humility, because "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away; and he was led as a sheep to the slaughter" (Acts 8:32–33, *cf.* Isa. 53:7–8). He taught us the way of obedience, for He too obeyed the Father unto the Cross and death (Phil. 2:8), and the way which bestows eternal life upon us through putting the passions to death.

17. For He too was dead, and behold He lives for evermore (*cf.* Rev. 1:18), giving life to those who cleave to Him through virtue and faith, glorifying them and glorified by them, together with His Father without beginning and the all-holy and good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY FIFTY-SEVEN

DELIVERED ON THE SUNDAY OF THE FATHERS[1011]

CONCERNING THE GENEALOGY ACCORDING TO THE FLESH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THE EVER-VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD WHO BORE HIM IN VIRGINITY

DAVID INDICATES that our Lord Jesus Christ has no genealogy with regard to His divinity (Ps. 110:4), Isaiah says the same (Isa. 53:8), and later so does the apostle (Heb. 7:3). How can the descent be traced of Him "who is in the beginning, and is with God, and is God, and is the Word and Son of God" (*cf.* John 1:1–2, 18)? He does not have a Father who was before Him,[1012] and shares with His Father "a name which is above every name" and all speech (Phil. 2:9).[1013] For the most part, genealogies are traced back through different surnames; but there is no surname for God (*cf.* Gen. 32:29), and whatever may be said of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, They are one and do not differ in any respect.[1014]

2. Impossible to recount is Christ's descent according to His divinity, but His ancestry according to His human nature can be traced, since He who deigned to become Son of man in order to save mankind was the offspring of men. And it is this genealogy of His that two of the evangelists, Matthew and Luke, recorded. But although Matthew, in the passage from his Gospel read today, begins with those born first, he makes no mention of anyone before Abraham. He traces the line down from Abraham until he reaches Joseph to whom, by divine dispensation, the Virgin Mother of God was betrothed (Matt. 1:1–16), being of the same tribe and homeland as him, that her own stock might be shown from this to be in no way inferior. Luke, by contrast, begins not with the earliest forebears

but the most recent, and working his way back from Joseph the Betrothed, does not stop at Abraham, nor, having included Abraham's predecessors, does he end with Adam, but lists God among Christ's human forebears (Luke 3:23–38); wishing to show, in my opinion, that from the beginning man was not just a creation of God, but also a son in the Spirit, which was given to him at the same time as his soul, through God's quickening breath (Gen. 2:7). It was granted to him as a pledge that, if, waiting patiently for it, he kept the commandment, he would be able to share through the same Spirit in a more perfect union with God, by which he would live for ever with Him and obtain immortality.

3. By heeding the evil counsel of the pernicious angel, man transgressed the divine commandments, was shown to be unworthy, forfeited the pledge and interrupted God's plan. God's grace, however, is unalterable and His purpose cannot prove false, so some of man's offspring were chosen, that, from among many, a suitable receptacle for this divine adoption and grace might be found, who would serve God's will perfectly, and would be revealed as a vessel worthy to unite divine and human nature in one person, not just exalting our nature, but restoring the human race. The holy Maid and Virgin Mother of God was this vessel, so she was proclaimed by the archangel Gabriel as full of grace (Luke 1:28),[1015] being the chosen one among the chosen, blameless, undefiled and worthy to contain the person of the God-man and to collaborate[1016] with Him. Therefore God pre-ordained her before all ages, chose her from among all who had ever lived, and deemed her worthy of more grace than anyone else, making her the holiest of saints,[1017] even before her mysterious childbearing. For that reason, He graciously willed that she should make her home in the Holy of Holies, and accepted her as His companion to share His dwelling from her childhood. He did not simply choose her from the masses, but from the elect of all time, who were admired and renowned for their piety and wisdom, and for their character, words and deeds, which pleased God and brought benefit to all.

4. Note where this choice began. The excellent Seth was chosen from among Adam's children, because by his well-ordered conduct, his control over his senses and his glorious virtue he showed himself to be a living heaven and so came to be one of the elect, from whom the Virgin would spring forth, that truly heavenly and divinely

appropriate[1018] chariot of the supracelestial God, and through whom He would call men back to eternal sonship. Therefore all Seth's stock were called sons of God (*cf.* Gen. 6:2), because it was from this race that the Son of God was to become the Son of man. That is why the name Seth can be interpreted to mean "resurrection", or rather "a rising up from",[1019] which really refers to the Lord, who promises and gives eternal life to those who believe in Him.

5. And how worthy a type of Christ is Seth?[1020] "Seth was born to Eve", as she herself says, "instead of Abel" (*cf.* Gen. 4:25), whom Cain envied and murdered, whereas the Virgin's son, Christ, was born to the human race instead of Adam, whom the prince and father of evil killed out of envy. Seth, however, did not raise up Abel, as he was merely a prefiguration of the resurrection, whereas our Lord Jesus Christ resurrected Adam, for He is the true life and resurrection of mankind (*cf.* John 11:25), through whom Seth's descendants were deemed worthy, in hope, of divine adoption, being called sons of God. That they were referred to as God's sons on account of this hope, is demonstrated by the first person to be so called and to inherit God's election. This was Seth's son Enos[1021] who, as Moses wrote, "was the first to hope to be called by the Lord's name" (*cf.* Gen. 4:26 LXX).[1022]

6. Do you see clearly that it was through hope that he came to be so called? If the Seventy[1023] say, "He was the first to hope to call upon the Lord's name", they are not at all in disagreement with the others;[1024] because Enos lived in a way that pleased God more than anyone else in his day, and was the first to receive this hope from God. He called upon this hope and was called after it.[1025] Seth was chosen by God from among Adam's sons, and so Luke, in preparing his genealogy, traces back to him the whole race from which Christ was born according to the flesh. Then Enos was chosen in preference to Seth's other children, as we have said. From his descendants Enoch[1026] was chosen, who proved through what happened to him that virtue does not go unrewarded, and that this fleeting world is not worthy of those who are well-pleasing to God, for he was translated because he pleased God (Gen. 5:24, Heb. 11:5). Lamech was chosen and preferred to Enoch's other descendants, and after him his son, Noah, attained to God's election and became the only father of everyone in the world after the flood. Only he and his entire family were found to live chastely at that time when the sons of God took wives from among the daughters of men, as Moses tells us (Gen. 6:1–2). This

means that among the offspring of Seth, the forefather of the Mother of God, those who were rejected as unworthy were swept out of the Virgin Mother's family and completely deprived of the divine Spirit. Later this Spirit came upon the Virgin, according to the angel's words to her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35). The Spirit also arranged beforehand for the Virgin to come into being, choosing from the beginning, and cleansing, the line of her descent, accepting those who were worthy, or were to become fathers of eminent men, but utterly casting out the unworthy.

7. This is why the Lord God said on that occasion of those rejected ones, "My spirit shall not abide with these men, for they are flesh" (*cf.* Gen. 6:3 LXX). Although the Virgin, of whom Christ was born according to the flesh, came from Adam's flesh and seed, yet, because this flesh had been cleansed in many different ways by the Holy Spirit from the start, she was descended from those who had been chosen from every generation for their excellence. Noah, too, "a just man and perfect in his generation", as the Scriptures say of him (Gen. 6:9), was found worthy of this election.

8. Observe also that the Holy Spirit makes it clear to such as have understanding[1027] that the whole of divinely inspired Scripture was written because of the Virgin Mother of God. It relates in detail the entire line of her ancestry, which begins with Adam, then passes through Seth, Noah and Abraham, as well as David and Zerubbabel, those in between them and their successors, and goes up to the time of the Virgin Mother of God. By contrast, Scripture does not touch upon some races at all, and in the case of others, it makes a start at tracing their descent, then soon abandons them, leaving them in the depths of oblivion. Above all, it commemorates those of the Mother of God's forebears who, in their own lives and the deeds wrought by them,[1028] prefigured Christ, who was to be born of the Virgin.

9. See how Noah clearly foreshadows Him who was later to be born of the Virgin, for whose sake the election was made. For Noah was shown to be the saviour, not of all the race of men in general, but of his own household, all of whom were saved through him. In the same way Christ, too, is the Saviour of the race of men, not of all men in general, but of all His own household, that is of His Church; not, however, of the disobedient. Furthermore, the name Noah can be translated to mean "rest" (*cf.* Gen. 5:29).[1029] But who is true "rest" except the Virgin's Son, who says, "Come unto me through

repentance, all ye that labour and are heavy laden with sins, and I will give you rest" (*cf.* Matt. 11:28), bestowing freedom, ease and eternal life upon you.

10. Lamech, who gave Noah this name, because he saw in him Christ, who was later to come from their stock, and would be the comfort of all God-fearing people down through the ages, clearly prophesied through this name concerning Christ. "He called his name Noah", says the Scripture, "saying, This same shall bring us rest from our works, and from the toils of our hands, and from the earth, which the Lord our God hath cursed" (Gen. 5:29 LXX). These words are not about the flood which came to pass, for Lamech's death preceded the flood, yet he says that Noah will "bring us rest", including himself as a partaker in the comfort he foretold. In those days it had not yet come about that in each man "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5) throughout his life, which was why the universal destruction of everyone on earth came upon the earth from God. So to whom do his words refer when he says, "He will bring us rest?" He also says, "He shall bring us rest from the earth, which God hath cursed". Who else gives us rest from this earth except Him who opened heaven, raised our nature thither and taught us, through words and deeds, the way up to heaven, calling us towards it? But if the flood too prefigured this rest, it did so by cutting off sins and laying them to rest, not by bringing comfort and ease to sinners.

11. In this way and for these reasons, Noah attained to God's election. Of his children, Shem[1030] was accepted among those chosen to be the blessed family of the Mother of God. That is why, although Japheth also appears to have been well-pleasing to his father,[1031] only Shem heard from his father, "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem" (Gen. 9:26), as his progeny was to be divine. For it was from him that Abraham was descended, who was preferred according to God's election above all Shem's offspring and was called to be part of the lineage of the Virgin Mother. He was given a new name by God, and received that great promise that all the families of the earth would be blessed in his seed (Gen. 17:5; 12:3). According to Paul, Christ our God, who was born of the Virgin, is his seed according to the flesh (Gal. 3:16). And who could describe the divine visions that Abraham experienced, or the signs and promises from God[1032] which foreshadowed and prophesied concerning the ever-virgin Mother of God and her ineffable childbearing? Let us, however, quickly pass over what

happened next, as time does not permit us to speak at length. From among Abraham's children Isaac was chosen, then Jacob from among his sons, and the tribe of Judah from Jacob's offspring. From this tribe the root of Jesse was selected, and from those who sprang from this root, David the psalmist and prophet and king, of whom God says, "Thy seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me; and as the moon that is established for ever, and the witness in heaven is faithful" (*cf.* Ps. 89:36–37 LXX).

12. Who is this witness? Obviously He who sits upon the heavenly throne, of whom it says elsewhere: "His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in him" (Ps. 72:17 LXX). From this the lineage of the Mother of God and Joseph, to whom she was betrothed, seems somehow double, for both were of the same tribe and descent according to the law. Thus the family's ancestral line is twofold, made up both of natural children and children according to the law, often converging into one, but sometimes divided into two, so that the same child, strange as it may seem, might be the son of two fathers who are brothers, of the one from a legal point of view, as not having been begotten of him physically, and of the other, according to nature, as having been raised up as seed for his brother (*cf.* Matt. 22:24, Deut. 25:5–6, Gen. 38:8); inasmuch as the child traces his ancestry back to David through both his fathers. It is possible to see the dual nature of this lineage in another respect, because the royal line was united on many occasions and in numerous ways with the priestly one. Thus in the holy ancestral line of the Mother of God, Zerubbabel traces his lineage back to David through the descendants of Nathan, who was counted among the priests, as well as through those of Solomon, who inherited the kingdom. For this reason the Lord's genealogy according to the flesh is drawn up differently by the evangelists Luke and Matthew, because one takes into account natural fathers, the other, fathers according to the law, and one mentions only those of royal descent, whereas Luke brings in those of the Levitical race and those of the royal house, who were bound together by priesthood or marriage.

13. As for Zerubbabel, because he was also favoured among the Mother of God's forebears, he too prefigured Christ and was honoured with great titles and authority. Born in captivity, he was admired by Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians, for his virtue and understanding.[1033] He taught both Hebrews and foreigners the power of the

truth,[1034] set his race free from servitude and restored God's Temple (1 Esd. 4:33–63, Ezra 3:1–13). Later, Christ did something similar, not renewing the inanimate Temple, but that living, rational temple, our nature, and redeeming it, not from perceptible and temporary, but spiritual and primeval captivity. Nor did he move His followers from one country to another, but transferred them from earth to heaven. Zerubbabel was the forefather of both the Virgin and Joseph to whom she was betrothed, but whereas he was the Virgin's forebear by nature alone, he was Joseph's according to nature and the law. For Joseph had two fathers, Heli according to Luke (Luke 3:23), and Jacob according to Matthew (Matt. 1:16). Heli and Jacob were brothers descended from Zerubbabel, and when Heli died without children, Jacob fathered a child, Joseph, by his brother's wife, who according to the law belonged to Heli.

14. Now these things are examples and types of greater mysteries, since it was necessary that the royal line be united in many ways with the priestly race, which would bring forth the family of Christ according to the flesh; because in many ways Christ is truly the eternal King and High Priest. And the fact that adopted sons are counted as sons, that the law approves of adoptive fathers no less and sometimes more than natural fathers, and that the same, appropriately, applies to other kinds of kinship, was a clear example and type of our adoption by Christ, our kinship with Him and our calling according to the Spirit and the law of grace. For the Lord Himself says in the Gospels, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12:50).

15. Do you see that the family and kin of Christ are not engendered according to nature, but according to grace and the law that comes from grace? This law is so far superior to the law given through Moses that, whereas those called sons according to the law of Moses are neither born of God nor do they transcend human nature, those styled sons by the law of grace are born of God, brought to perfection above nature and made sons of Abraham through Christ, more closely associated with him than sons according to blood. All who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, according to Paul (Gal. 3:27), and although they are other people's children according to nature, they are born supernaturally of Christ, who in this way conquers nature. For as He became incarnate without seed of the Holy Spirit

and the ever-virgin Mary, so He grants potential and power to those who believe in His name to become children of God. For "as many as received him", says the evangelist, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12–13).

16. Why, when he says, "which were born of God", does he not say "and became sons of God", but "received power to become" sons? Because he was looking towards the end and the universal restoration,[1035] the perfection of the age to come. The same evangelist says in his epistles, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). Then shall we be children of God, seeing and experiencing God's radiance, with the rays of Christ's glory shining around us, and ourselves shining, as Moses and Elijah proved to us when they appeared with Him in glory on Mount Tabor (Matt. 17:3, Luke 9:30).[1036] "The righteous", it says, "shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). We receive power for this purpose now through the grace of divine baptism. Just as a newborn infant has received potential from his parents to become a man and heir to their house and fortune, but does not yet possess that inheritance because he is a minor, nor will he receive it if he dies before coming of age, so a person born again in the Spirit through Christian baptism[1037] has received power to become a son and heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ (*cf.* Rom. 8:17), and in the age to come he will, with all certainty, receive the divine and immortal adoption as a son, which will not be taken from him, unless he has forfeited this by spiritual death. Sin is spiritual death, and whereas physical death is annulled when the future age arrives, spiritual death is confirmed for those who bring it with them from here.[1038]

17. Everyone who has been baptized, if he is to obtain the eternal blessedness and salvation for which he hopes, should live free from all sin. Peter and Paul, the leaders of the highest company of the holy apostles made this clear. Paul said of Christ, "In that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God", adding, "likewise we also ought to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God" (*cf.* Rom. 6:10–11), whereas Peter wrote, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath died for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: that ye no longer should live the rest of your time by the lusts of men, but by the will of God" (*cf.* 1 Pet. 4:1–2). If it was for our sake

that the Lord lived His time on earth, to leave us an example, and He passed His life without sin, we too must live without sin, in imitation of Him. Since He said even to Abraham's descendants according to the flesh, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39), how much more will He say to us who have no physical kinship with Him, "If you were My children, you would do My works"? It is therefore consistent and just that anyone who, after divine baptism, after the covenants[1039] he made then to God and the grace he received from it, does not follow Christ's way of life step by step, but transgresses and offends against the benefactor, should be utterly deprived of divine adoption and the eternal inheritance.[1040]

18. But, O Christ our King, who can worthily extol the greatness of Your love for mankind? What was unnecessary for Him and what He did not do, namely, repentance (for He never needed to repent, being sinless, *cf.* Heb. 4:15),[1041] He granted to us as a mediator[1042] for when we sin even after receiving grace. Repentance means returning once again to Him and to a life according to His will out of remorse.[1043] Even if someone commits a deadly sin, if he turns away from it with all his soul, abstains from it and turns back to the Lord in deed and truth, he should take courage and be of good hope, for he shall not lose eternal life and salvation. When a child according to the flesh meets his death, he is not brought back to life by his father, but someone born of Christ, even though he fall into deadly sins, if he turns again and runs to the Father who raises the dead, is made alive once more, obtains divine adoption, and is not cast out from the company of the just.

19. May we all attain to this, to the glory of Christ and of His Father without beginning and of the life-giving Spirit, now and for ever, and unto unceasing ages. Amen.

HOMILY FIFTY-EIGHT

ON THE SAVING NATIVITY ACCORDING TO THE FLESH OF OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST[1044]

THIS IS THE FESTIVAL of the virgin birth! Our address must be exalted therefore in accordance with the greatness of the feast, and enter into the mystery, as far as this is accessible and permissible, and time allows, that something of its inner power might be revealed even to us. Please strive, brethren, to lift up your minds as well,[1045] that they may better perceive the light of divine knowledge, as though brightly illumined by a holy star. For today I see equality of honour between heaven and earth, and a way up for all those below to things above, matching the condescension of those on high. However great the heaven of heavens may be, or the upper waters which form a roof over the celestial regions,[1046] or any heavenly place, state or order, they are no more marvellous or honourable than the cave, the manger, the water sprinkled on the infant and His swaddling clothes. For nothing done by God from the beginning of time was more beneficial to all or more divine than Christ's nativity, which we celebrate today.

2. The pre-eternal and uncircumscribed and almighty Word is now born according to the flesh, without home, without shelter, without dwelling, and placed as a babe in the manger, seen by men's eyes, touched by their hands, and wrapped in layers of swaddling bands. He is not a spiritual creature coming into being after previously not existing; nor flesh which is brought to birth but will soon perish; nor flesh and mind united to form a rational creature, but God and flesh

mingled unconfusedly by the divine Mind to form the existence of one theandric hypostasis,[1047] who entered the Virgin's womb for a time.[1048] By the good pleasure of the Father and the co-operation of the Spirit, the Word who transcends being came into being in this womb and by means of it, and now He is delivered from it and born as an infant, not loosing but preserving the signs of virginity. He is born without suffering, as He was conceived without passion,[1049] for as His mother was shown to be above the pleasure of passion when she conceived, so she is above grievous pains when she gives birth. "Before the pain of travail came upon her, she escaped it", as Isaiah says (*cf.* Isa. 66:7 Lxx), and she brought forth in the flesh the pre-eternal Word. Not only is His divinity inscrutable, but the manner in which He was united with flesh is past understanding, His condescension unsurpassable, and the human nature He assumed divinely, ineffably sublime, and so far above all thought and speech,[1050] that it does not admit of any comparison with creation. Even though you see in the flesh the child born to the Maid who knew no husband, He is still beyond compare. It says, "He is fair in beauty beside the sons of men" (*cf.* Ps. 45:2 Lxx). It does not say "fairer" but simply "fair", so as not to compare incomparable things: the nature of God Himself to that of mere men.[1051]

3. "God, thy God", it says, "hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Ps. 45:7). The same one is both perfect God and perfect man; the same God is both the one who anoints and is anointed. For it says, "God, thy God hath anointed thee". It is as man that the Word from God the Father is anointed, and He is anointed with the co-eternal Spirit who is of one nature with Him.[1052] This is the oil of gladness, which is why, again, it is the same God who is both the divine unction and the one anointed.[1053] But although He is anointed as man, as God He has the source of anointing within Himself. That is why he who beheld things in a divine manner saw and foretold that all those anointed by God were partakers of His life.[1054] For it is the property of God alone not to partake of the lives of others but to be partaken of,[1055] and to have as partakers those who rejoice in the Spirit. Such is the infant born now in the lowly stable, and hymned by us as a babe in the manger.

4. For He who produced all earthly and heavenly things out of non-being, when He saw that His rational creatures were brought to nothing because of their desire for something greater (*cf.* Gen. 3:5),

bestowed upon them Himself, than whom nothing is greater, and to whom nothing is equal or comes near to being equal, and offered Himself to be partaken of by those who so wished,[1056] in order that from that time forward we might exercise our desire for something better without risk, although in the beginning we fell into the ultimate danger on that account (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:26),[1057] and in order that each of us, in desiring to become God, might not only be blameless, but also attain to our longing.[1058] In a mysterious way, He abolished the pretext for the original fall, which was the superiority and inferiority observable in beings and the resulting envy and treachery, as also the disputes, both open and concealed, which this caused. Because the author of evil did not want to be lower than any of the angels, but to be equal in excellence to the Creator Himself, he was the first to suffer the terrible fall before anyone else. Smitten by envy, he deceitfully attacked Adam and dragged him down to the abyss of Hades by means of the same desire. By so doing, he made Adam's fall difficult to reverse, and it required God's extraordinary presence, which has now been accomplished, to restore him. His own fall, however, he rendered incurable once and for all, because he did not acquire his arrogance from anyone else,[1059] but became himself the principle of evil[1060] and the fullness of evil, and made himself available to anyone wishing to participate in evil.[1061]

5. Now since it was God's good pleasure to annul the pretext for that pride which brought down His rational creatures, He makes everything like Himself; and because by nature He is equal to Himself and equal in honour,[1062] He makes the creation equal to itself by grace and equal in honour.[1063] And how was this done? The very Word of God from God emptied Himself in an indescribable way, came down from on high to the lowest state of man's nature, and indissolubly linked it with Himself,[1064] and in humbling Himself and becoming poor like us, He raised on high the things below,[1065] or rather, He gathered both things into one, mingling humanity with divinity, and by so doing He taught everyone that humility is the road which leads upwards, setting forth today Himself as an example before men and holy angels alike.

6. Because of this, the angels now possess steadfastness,[1066] having learnt in a practical way from the Master that the way to be exalted and to resemble Him is not arrogance but humility. Because of this, men are easily set right,[1067] as they recognize humility as the

road by which they are recalled. Because of this, the prince of evil, who is conceit itself,[1068] has been put to shame and overthrown, whereas previously he imagined that he could somehow stand and was something, inasmuch as he had enslaved some, and pulled them down with himself, through their desire for something greater, while also hoping to do the same to others through their extreme folly. Now he is seen as a plaything, having been well and truly found out by those he had evilly deceived before. Now that Christ has been born, the devil is trampled down by those who were previously under his feet, who are no longer presumptuous, as the destroyer advised, but identify with the lowly (*cf.* Rom. 12:16), as the Saviour taught through His deeds, and win heavenly exaltation through humility.

7. That is why God who sits upon the cherubim (Ps. 99:1) is set before us as a babe on earth. He upon whom the six-winged seraphim cannot look, being unable to gaze intently not only at His nature but even at the radiance of His glory, and therefore covering their eyes with their wings (Isa. 6:2), having become flesh, appears to our senses and can be seen by bodily eyes.[1069] He who defines all things and is delimited by none[1070] is contained in a small, makeshift manger. He who holds the universe and grasps it in the hollow of His hand, is wrapped in narrow swaddling bands and fastened into ordinary clothes. He who possesses the riches of inexhaustible treasures submits Himself voluntarily to such great poverty that He does not even have a place at the inn; and so He enters into a cave at the time of His birth, who was brought forth by God timelessly and impassibly and without beginning.[1071] And – how great a wonder! – not only does He who shares the nature of the Father on high[1072] put on our fallen nature through His birth, nor is He subject merely to the utter poverty of being born in a wretched cave, but right from the very start, while still in the womb, He accepts the final condemnation of our nature.[1073] He who is by nature Lord of all is now ranked with the servants and enrolled with them (Luke 2:1–6),[1074] clearly making humble service to others no less honourable than the exercise of lordship,[1075] or rather, showing the servants as having greater honour than the earthly ruler at that time, provided of course they understood and obeyed the magnificence of grace. For the man who then seemed to rule the world[1076] was not counted with the King of heaven, though all his subjects were, nor was this earthly ruler reckoned then as one of them, but the heavenly Lord was.

8. David, who is a forefather of God on account of Him who has now been born of his line, hymns God somewhere, "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments" (Ps. 119:73). What does this mean? That only the Creator can grant true understanding. Anyone who has been vouchsafed understanding and grasped the honour which our nature received from God through being formed by His hands in His own image, will run towards Him, having come to a realization of His love for mankind, and will obey Him and learn His commandments. But how much more so if he comprehends, as far as is possible, this great mystery of our re-creation and restoration. God formed human nature out of the earth with His own hand and breathed His own life into man (Gen. 2:7, *cf.* 1 Thess. 5:23), whereas everything else He brought into being by His word alone. He then allowed man to be governed by his own thoughts and follow his own initiative, because he was a rational creature with a sovereign will.[1077] Left alone, deceived by the evil one's counsel and unable to withstand his assault, man did not keep to what was in accordance with his nature, but slid towards what was unnatural to it.[1078] So now God not only forms human nature anew by His own hand in a mysterious way, but also keeps it near Him. Not only does He assume this nature and raise it up from the fall, but He inexpressibly clothes Himself in it and unites Himself inseparably with it and was born as both God and man: from a woman, in the first instance, that He might take upon Himself the same nature which He formed in our forefathers; and from a woman who was a virgin, in the second, so that He might make man new.

9. If He had been born from seed, He would not have been a new man[1079] and, being part of the old stock, and inheriting that fall, He would not have been able to receive the fullness of the incorruptible Godhead in Himself and become an inexhaustible source of hallowing. And so, not only would He not have been able to cleanse, with abundance of power, our forefathers' defilement caused by sin, but neither would He have been sufficient[1080] to sanctify those who came later. Just as water stored in a tank would not be sufficient to provide a large city with enough to drink continuously, but would require its own spring,[1081] so that it is never surrendered to the enemy on account of thirst; in the same way, neither a man nor a holy angel who, by sharing in grace,[1082] had the ability to make things holy, would suffice to sanctify everyone at all times. But creation needed a well

containing its own spring,[1083] that those who drew near it and drank their full might remain undefeated by the attacks of weaknesses and deprivations inherent in the created world. So neither an angel nor a man, but the Lord Himself came and saved us, being made a man like us for our sake, and continuing unchanged as God.[1084] Building now the new Jerusalem, raising up a temple for Himself with living stones (Eph. 2:20–21, *cf.* 1 Pet. 2:5), and gathering us into a holy and worldwide Church, He sets in its foundation, which is Christ (*cf.* 1 Cor. 3:11), the ever-flowing fount of grace. For the Lord's eternal fullness of life, the all-wise and omnipotent divine nature, is made one with human nature, which was led astray through lack of counsel, enslaved to the evil one out of weakness, and laid in the deepest caverns of Hades for want of divine life, that the Lord might instil into it wisdom and power and freedom and unfailing life.[1085]

10. And look forthwith at the symbols of this ineffable union and the resulting benefit poured out even upon those far away. A star accompanies the magi (Matt. 2:2–10): coming to a halt when they do, and travelling with them when they move on, or rather, drawing them and inviting them to the road, as their leader escorting them on their journey. It offers itself as their guide when they are on the move, and when they rest awhile it permits them to do so, and itself stays in its place, lest deserting them it should grieve them by its absence, seeming to abandon its rôle as guide before journey's end. For it caused them considerable distress by concealing itself from them when they approached Jerusalem.

11. Why did it hide from them while they were there? To make them, through their enquiries, unsuspecting heralds of Christ who was born at that time according to the flesh. Because they presumed they would learn from the Jews where Christ was to be born according to the sacred prophecies, the divine star left them, teaching us that we should no longer seek to find out about the law and the prophets from the Jews, but rather to seek after the teaching that comes from heaven, lest we be deprived of grace and the outpouring of light from above. When they left Jerusalem, the star appeared again to their delight, and went before them to lead the way, "till it came and stood over where the young child was" (Matt. 2:9), obviously worshipping with them[1086] this earthly and heavenly infant. This star first brings the magi as a birthday gift to God, born upon earth, and through them

to the whole Assyrian nation, according to the saying of Isaiah: "In those days the Assyrians shall be the first nation for God, and after them the Egyptians, and Israel shall be the third" (*cf.* Isa. 19:23–24), as is now seen coming to pass. For the veneration by the magi was immediately followed by the flight into Egypt (Matt. 2:13), during which He delivered the Egyptians from idols (*cf.* Isa. 19:1),[1087] and after His return from there, a nation worthy of God's possession was chosen from among Israel.

12. And while Isaiah openly foretold these events, the magi worshipped Him in person, bringing gold and frankincense and myrrh (Matt. 2:11, *cf.* Isa. 60:6) to Him who, through death, symbolized by myrrh, grants us divinely inspired life, of which frankincense is an image, and His divine radiance and kingdom,[1088] represented by the gold offered to the giver of eternal glory. On account of Him who is born today,[1089] shepherds stand in the same choir as angels, sing the same hymn, and strike up a melody together. The angels do not take the shepherds' pipes into their hands, but the shepherds, surrounded by the radiance of the angels' light, find themselves in the midst of the heavenly host and are taught a heavenly song of praise by the angels, or rather a hymn both heavenly and earthly, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace" (Luke 2:14). Now He who dwells on high and reigns over the celestial heights has the earth as His throne, and is glorified on earth as much as there (*cf.* Isa. 66:1, Acts 7:49), by His saints and His angels alike.

13. But what is the cause of this praise from men and angels together and this much-extolled good news which so gladdens the shepherds and all men? "Behold", it says, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:10). What does this mean, and what is this universal joy? Listen to the Gospel song to the end and you will understand. "Peace", it says, "good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). For God, who was angry with the human race and subjected it to terrible curses,[1090] has come in the flesh, granting His peace and reconciling them to the heavenly Father. Behold, says the hymn, He has not been born for us angels, though now that we see Him on earth we extol Him as we do in heaven, but for you men, that is to say, for your sake and in accordance with your nature a Saviour is born, Christ the Lord, in the city of David.

14. What is meant by linking God's good will with peace? "Peace", it says, "good will toward men". There were times before when He

gave signs of peace to men. To Moses "the Lord spake, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exod. 33:11); and He found David a man after His own heart (1 Sam. 13:14, Acts 13:22); and He granted tokens of peace to the whole Jewish nation when He came down upon the mountain for their sake and spoke to them through fire and the thick dark cloud (Exod. 19:9, 16–18, Deut. 4:10–11), but not according to His good pleasure. For good will refers to that which is in and of itself well-pleasing, the original and perfect will of God. It was not the original and perfect will of God that He granted benefits, and not even perfect ones, to certain men or to one nation only. That is why, just as God called many people His sons, but there is only one in whom He was well-pleased (*cf.* Matt. 3:17; 17:5), so He gave His peace on many occasions, but only once accompanied by His good pleasure, which He grants, perfect and unchanging, through the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ to every race and to as many as desire it.

15. Brethren, let us preserve this peace in ourselves[1091] as far as we can, for we have received it as an inheritance from our Saviour who has now been born, who gives us the Spirit of adoption, through which we have become heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ (*cf.* Rom. 8:15, 17). Let us be at peace with God, doing those things which are well-pleasing to Him, living chastely, telling the truth, behaving righteously, "continuing in prayer and supplication" (*cf.* Acts 1:14), "singing and making melody in our heart" (*cf.* Eph. 5:19), not just with our lips. Let us be at peace with ourselves, by subjecting our flesh to our spirit, choosing to conduct ourselves according to our conscience, and having the inner world of our thoughts motivated by good order and purity. Thus we shall put an end to the civil conflict in our own midst. Let us be at peace with one another, "forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you" (Col. 3:13), and showing mercy to each other out of mutual love, just as Christ, solely for love of us, had mercy on us and for our sake came down to us. Then, recalled from the sinful fall through His help and grace, and lifted high above this world by virtues, we may have our citizenship in heavenly places (*cf.* Phil. 3:20), whence also we wait for our hope (*cf.* Rom. 8:23), redemption from corruption and enjoyment of celestial and eternal blessings as children of the heavenly Father.

16. May we all attain to this, at the future glorious advent and epiphany of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom belongs glory unto the ages. Amen.

HOMILY FIFTY-NINE

On What is Accomplished in Holy Baptism And About Repentance And What Saint John the Baptist Said About This Subject

DELIVERED ON THE EVE OF THEOPHANY

REPENTANCE IS THE BEGINNING, middle and end of the Christian way of life, so it is both sought and required before holy baptism, in holy baptism, and after holy baptism. We are asked to express our repentance in words at the time of our baptism, when we are questioned about our good conscience towards God, make a covenant with Him and promise to live a God-pleasing life that bears witness to our love for Him. For, having believed, we promise allegiance[1092] to Christ, who is good and surpasses all goodness, renouncing[1093] the evil and thoroughly depraved enemy, and we take it upon ourselves to hold with all our strength to God's commandments, which bring about what is good, and to abstain from every evil thought and deed. When asked, we reply, either in person or, as happens in the case of infants being baptized, through our godparents, concerning what we have believed, inwardly accepted and agreed to with our minds.[1094] And since, according to the apostle, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10), when we make this good confession with our mouth we receive salvation through the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5).

2. As it happens that most people are infants at the time of this divine washing and all that accompanies it, and do not recognize

the power of the mystery, come, let us reveal it in a few words in the hearing of all, as the approaching feast demands. For I think that recalling and elucidating rites performed in divine baptism will bring no small benefit, especially to those who listen with understanding. For if through this reminder we discover that we afterwards neglected any of the undertakings made at our baptism, or failed from the very beginning to put certain things into practice, we shall start again by means of repentance.

3. When the bishop learns that someone has come seeking to be baptized, he first rejoices inwardly, in imitation of the Lord who loves what is good, and gives spiritual thanks to God,[1095] who alone wills and brings about every good thing. Then he calls together the church in his care, that together they might celebrate, and assist in the salvation of the person who has come forward.[1096] The bishop stands at the sacred altar with the priests and, after openly expressing his thanksgiving with them, he comes out and asks the candidate with what wish he has come to church. When he replies, either himself or through his godparent, if he is an infant, that he desires to become God's, through His mediation and with His help, and to attain to divine blessings, the bishop tells him, "As you are drawing near to God who is true, perfect and sinless, the manner of your approach, your promise and the way you live from now on must be appropriate: that is to say, full of truth and integrity, and blameless". Having given him guidance on living according to the gospel of Christ, he asks again if he chooses to live such a life. Once the candidate has given his agreement, the bishop seals him with the sign of the Cross, and bids the priests to deem his name worthy of being added to the list, placing him from then on among those being saved,[1097] as a lover of the life-giving way of life.

4. Then, having prayed to God once more, the bishop commands that he be stripped of all his clothing and, standing with his face towards the west, that he make gestures with his hands as though he were pushing Satan away, blow at him and renounce him, and upon questioning to make this renunciation three times. The candidate's nakedness signifies putting off the old man (*cf.* Eph. 4:22) and his unholy life; the act of driving someone away with his hands while looking westwards indicates turning away from the darkness of sin; and by blowing he demonstrates that he is breathing out that disposition which is inborn in him because of the former sin, getting rid of

it and, as it were, throwing it at the devil as it belongs to him. The threefold declaration of renunciation is the sign of his resolute and perfect escape from God's adversary. Once the person to be baptized has completed these acts, the bishop exhorts him to turn to face the east and, lifting up his hands, to align himself with Christ[1098] by responding to three questions. Looking eastwards is a sign that, having fled from evil, he is looking up at the divine light;[1099] raising his hands symbolizes prayer with boldness; and the threefold confession when he makes his commitment proves the steadfastness of his promise to God.

5. Once he has withdrawn in this way from every evil and run with all his strength to the perfection of goodness, the bishop seals him three times with the holy oil of anointing,[1100] then lets the priests anoint his whole body. The anointing signifies preparation for holy struggles, and from then on, as the person being baptized sets out in the footsteps of Christ – the first to be martyred under Pontius Pilate – he is put to death with Him, having become dead to sin in mysterious fashion. Holy baptism is a symbol of this death. After the holy unction,[1101] he is immediately led to the sacred font, which has been thoroughly sanctified beforehand by various holy rites and ablutions. Once he has been brought, the bishop baptizes him[1102] by immersing him three times, invoking at each immersion one of the three persons whom we worship.

6. Water is a means of cleansing, but not for souls. It can remove dirt from those being baptized, but not the grime that comes from sin. For that reason the Healer of souls, the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9), Christ, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), enters the water before us to be baptized, as we celebrate today in advance. He draws the grace of the all-holy Spirit from above to dwell in the water with Him, so that later when those being baptized as He was enter the water, He is there, clothing them ineffably with His Spirit, attaching Himself to them, and filling them with the grace that purifies and illumines reasonable spirits. And this is what the divine Paul is referring to: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

7. While the three immersions in the water are also the saving invocation of the life-giving Trinity, they represent the Lord's three-day burial. Following this, the person being baptized comes out of the water the same number of times, because otherwise he could not have been submerged three times, but also because this signifies the

resurrection from sin of the three parts of the soul,[1103] and the return of the mind, soul and body, all three together, to incorruption.[1104] Thus in divine baptism both death and life can be seen, the tomb together with the resurrection, just as the Lord, who "in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth continuously unto God" (*cf.* Rom. 6:10). And what the Lord had said, that "the prince of this world cometh, and will find nothing in me" (*cf.* John 14:30), should also apply to us who have been baptized into His death. Having died to sin through divine baptism, we ought to be alive to God through virtue, so that when the prince of darkness comes looking, he may find nothing in us pleasing to him. And as Christ has risen from the dead, "death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9), and in the same way we, after being raised from the sinful fall through divine baptism, must strive not to be held fast by sin any longer. "So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3–4).

8. For this reason, the bishop, having clothed the person who has been baptized in a radiant white garment, and anointed him with holy chrism,[1105] and having made him a communicant of Christ's body and blood,[1106] then sends him on his way,[1107] showing that he has thenceforth become a child of light, both united in one body with Christ and a partaker of the Holy Spirit.[1108] For we are born again (*cf.* John 3:3–5) and become heavenly sons of God (*cf.* Rom. 8:14–19, Phil. 2:15, 1 John 3:1–2) instead of earthly beings, eternal instead of transient. God has mystically implanted heavenly grace in our hearts and set the seal of adoption as sons upon us through anointing with this holy chrism,[1109] sealing us by means of the all-holy Spirit for the day of redemption (*cf.* Eph. 4:30), provided we keep this confession firm to the end and fulfil our promise through deeds, though we may renew it through repentance if it drifts a little off course. That is why works of repentance are necessary even after baptism. But if they are absent, the words of our promise to God are not only useless but also condemn us. "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Eccles. 5:5). And, as Peter the leader of the highest company of the apostles says, "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered

unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:21–22). Another of the apostles says, "Shew me thy faith by thy works" (Jas. 2:18), and, "Who is a faithful man? Let him shew his faith by a good manner of life" (*cf.* Jas. 3:13). The Lord Himself asks, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). He is the living and true God, and seeks from us truthful promises, and living, not dead faith: for "faith without works is dead" (Jas. 2:26).

9. As repentance is the beginning and end of the Christian way of life, the Lord's Forerunner and Baptist, who was himself the starting point of this approach to living, preached saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). And the Lord Himself, the perfection of all goodness, said the same in His preaching (Matt. 4:17). Repentance means hating sin and loving virtue, turning away from evil and doing good (*cf.* Ps. 34:14, 1 Pet. 3:11). These acts are preceded, however, by condemning ourselves for our faults,[1110] being penitent before God, fleeing to Him for refuge with a contrite heart, and casting ourselves into the ocean of His mercy, considering ourselves unworthy to be counted among His sons. As the prodigal son said when he repented, "Lord, I am not worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (*cf.* Luke 15:19).

10. The Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord publicly raised the subject of the kingdom of heaven, affirming that it was near, so that people might reckon themselves unworthy on account of the greatness of the divine and heavenly kingdom and condemn themselves,[1111] which is the beginning of salvation for everyone, and an occasion for returning to God. But he also holds up an axe and states that it is laid at the very root of the tree, all but threatening to fell it (*cf.* Matt. 3:10). Being hewn down is God's sentence on those who justify themselves and sin without repenting, and, in accordance with this decision, once they have been cut off from the present and future life, they are sent away to dark, unquenchable hell-fire.[1112] That is why the Baptist, too, warns that after such people have been cut down, inextinguishable fire receives them, making known in this way the awfulness of God's wrath and that eternal punishment, in order to bring to their senses that insensitive race and men like them who came later.

11. The Lord's Forerunner did not guide men just to the starting point of repentance, which is keeping away from evil things and

profitable contrition of heart, but also sought fruits worthy of repentance (Matt. 3:8). What are these? Firstly confession, as practiced by those who came to him at that time. "Then they went out", it says, "and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matt. 3:5–6). Next, he looked for righteousness, almsgiving, moderation,[1113] love, truthfulness,[1114] telling them, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you", "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely" (Luke 3:13, 14), and "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise" (Luke 3:11). "For every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low" (Luke 3:5). What is the hidden meaning of valleys being filled in and mountains being brought low? Exactly what the Lord says plainly, "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:14). The Baptist also says, "The crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:5–6). Lying, deceit and slander[1115] are crooked, and the rough paths are anger, hatred, envy and remembrance of wrongs,[1116] all of which are made straight and level when transformed by the works of repentance. And so "all flesh", that is, every person of every nation and race who straightens and smoothes himself out through repentance, "shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6).

12. As I speak these words to you, brethren, I feel no small pain in my soul, that we who were long ago vouchsafed Christian baptism have not yet accomplished those very things which John demanded of those approaching his own baptism. Yet the Lord's baptism, of which we were deemed worthy, is as far superior to the baptism given by John in those days, as the grace of the Holy Spirit is more excellent than water; and in proof of this the Lord said to His disciples, "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 1:5). Whereas John baptized so that people would believe in Him who was coming, the Lord transformed John's baptism through Himself, mystically planting within it through Himself the pre-eternal fount of grace. While John was teaching these things and baptizing those who approached, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee to the Jordan, to be baptized by John (Matt. 3:13, Mark 1:9, Luke 3:21, *cf.* John 1:29–31). He did not come on the twelfth day after His birth, as we now keep this feast,[1117] rightly choosing to commemorate each year everything accomplished in the course of

the dispensation whereby God became man. He came rather when He had reached thirty years of age, as Luke relates (Luke 3:23), seeming to be one of the crowd, with no indication that He was at all different, in simplicity and utter lowliness and obscurity.

13. John, however, knew through the clear vision of the Spirit[1118] that He was drawing near, and said to the multitude, "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not, who is after me", according to His birth and appearance in the flesh, but "was before me" (*cf.* John 1:26–27, 15), as God, the Word and Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, and now bearing bodily the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9), "the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose" (Luke 3:16). What else can the shoes of the Word of God be except, obviously, the flesh, which He put on for our sake? The strap of these shoes is the way in which His divinity is joined with His flesh,[1119] which is beyond words, and which even the highest man born of woman (*cf.* Matt. 11:11) is inadequate to analyse and clarify. "He", says John, "shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matt. 3:11); fire, that is to say, which is capable of enlightening and punishing, with each one receiving what is appropriate, according to what his disposition merits. We are all His rational field (1 Cor. 3:9), and He has "the winnowing-fan" for that field "in His hand" (Matt. 3:12), meaning the powers who minister to Him and the angels who will serve Him at the coming Judgment, separating the tares from the wheat (*cf.* Matt. 13:39–42). You should understand His hand to be His power. "And he will purge", it says, "his floor", that is the entire world, "and gather his wheat", those who are fruitful in righteousness, "unto the garner", signifying the heavenly dwellings, "but he will burn up the chaff" as being of no use, meaning those who are barren with regard to virtue, "with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12). If that fire will never be extinguished, it must have inexhaustible fuel, and this shows that damnation is eternal.

14. John was saying such things as this to the crowds before the Lord came to the Jordan and while He was present. When John saw Him bowing down he himself bent low and "forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee" (Matt. 3:14), for I was born from the old seed[1120] and am an heir of that fall and the defilement[1121] it brought, and I myself need cleansing by You. And You, who took flesh from the Holy Virgin without seed,[1122] and who alone, as God, are free from sin, You, Lord, come to me? But as a Master giving orders to his servant the Lord says, "Suffer it to be so now" (Matt. 3:15). He added "now", because after the Lord had been baptized that whole

place became a spiritual font, and divine grace encompassed John as well as all the others, poured out upon all from that revered body as from a fountain, flowing around all who were worthy, giving divine enlightenment and redeeming them from the ancestral curse.[1123]

15. And this is what John himself said after these things, "This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received" (John 1:15–16). "Suffer it to be so now", Jesus tells him, "for thus it becometh us", meaning "Me". These words, too, are spoken to John with authority. "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15), that is, that I may leave no divine commandment undone, thus perfectly justifying human nature and filling it more visibly with divine and eternal grace. For when I receive baptism at your hands, I shall manifestly[1124] draw down upon it from above the Spirit of adoption.

16. John, hearing the Master's command, "Suffer it to be so", had nothing to say in reply, and let the Lord be baptized. We shall speak tomorrow of what happened next, for these events belong especially to the appointed feastday.

17. The Spirit comes upon us and departs of His own volition, being of equal might with the Father and the Son.[1125] He stays with those who live in repentance, and even if they sin does not leave them. as we have seen from David (2 Sam. 12:1ff, *cf.* Ps. 51:11), but forsakes those who sin without repenting, as we have found out from Saul (*cf.* 1 Sam. 16:14). So may we all, clinging throughout our lives to the works, words and thoughts of repentance, have Him always dwelling within us, to give us understanding, care for us, and grant us heavenly salvation, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY SIXTY

DELIVERED ON THE HOLY FEAST OF THEOPHANY[1126]

DISCLOSING THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST'S BAPTISM AS FAR AS IS POSSIBLE

YESTERDAY WHEN I WAS IN CHURCH, celebrating with you as you kept the forefeast of the day of Lights,[1127] I spoke on such themes as the occasion demanded and said to your charity about Christian baptism,[1128] which we have been deemed worthy to receive, that it is both a recognition[1129] of God and a promise to God. On the one hand it is faith in, and acknowledgment of, the truth in God; on the other, a covenant and a promise,[1130] effected through holy symbols,[1131] that our deeds, words and behaviour will be pleasing to God. But we also went on to teach that if we do not put those undertakings into practice, those holy symbols and the verbal promises to God made through them and with them are not only of no benefit, but also rightly bring us under condemnation. Next we expounded the teaching of the Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John to the crowds, which also deals with the same baptism. Because, as we have said, baptism is the recognition of God, and the Forerunner and Baptist of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ leads us to recognize Him through his own teaching, showing us that He is pre-eternal[1132] and Master of all, Judge of both the living and the dead, who has authority to bring those who are worthy into eternal dwellings, and cast the condemned into hell.[1133] And while John bears witness that Christ is also Lord of the angels, he counts himself among the very lowest of His servants.

2. But because baptism is not just the recognition of God, but also a promise to turn back to Him and to do works that please Him,

that is why Christ's Forerunner and Baptist did not merely guide people towards acknowledging Christ, but also preached repentance and sought fruits worthy of repentance: righteousness, almsgiving, moderation,[1134] love and the truth. And to make it clear that a promise to God is useless without deeds, and condemns a man, he held out the threat of an axe and drew attention to the unquenchable fire, saying, "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3:10). In addition, we explained to your charity the Baptist's words to the Lord Himself when He came to be baptized. Out of reverence, John stepped back and excused himself from performing the deed, asking that he might rather receive baptism from the Lord. We also, however, related what the Lord said to him, giving him orders as a master does his servant, but at the same time revealing the mystery to him as a friend and relative according to the flesh, and pointing out His good reasons. Speaking to you on that occasion we reached the point where John, having been persuaded, let the Lord be baptized. There remains that part of the Gospel which has now been read in your hearing: "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16–17).

3. Great and exalted, brethren, is the mystery of Christ's baptism contained in these few words. It is both difficult to contemplate and hard to interpret, and no less difficult to comprehend. But since it pertains especially to our salvation, we are persuaded by Him who urges us to search the Scriptures (John 5:39), and take courage to investigate the power of the mystery, as far as it is accessible to us. Just as in the beginning, after God had said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26), when our nature was created in Adam, the life-giving Spirit,[1135] who was manifested and given to man by God breathing into him (Gen. 2:7), revealed at once the tri-hypostatic character of the creative divinity[1136] to the other creatures, which were brought into existence by the word alone of the Word and made manifest simply by the Father who spoke;[1137] so now that our nature was being re-made in Christ,[1138] when the Holy Spirit was revealed through His descent from the supracelestial regions upon the Lord being baptized in the Jordan, He disclosed the

mystery of the most sublime and all-accomplishing Trinity,[1139] which is able to save[1140] reasonable creatures.

4. Why is the mystery of the Holy Trinity shown forth when man is formed and also when he is formed anew? Not just because man is, on earth, the only initiate into this mystery and the only creature to venerate it, but because he alone is in the image of the Trinity.[1141] Sensible and irrational animals have only a living spirit,[1142] which is incapable of independent existence, and is completely devoid of mind or reason.[1143] But the perfectly suprasensible angels and archangels, as they are intelligent and rational,[1144] have a mind and reason, but no quickening spirit, since they also lack bodies which would need to be animated by such a spirit.[1145] Man is the only creature who, in the image of the tri-hypostatic Being,[1146] has a mind, reason, and a spirit which gives life to his body, inasmuch as he also has a body which needs to be infused with life.[1147] When our nature was re-made in the Jordan, the most sublime and all-accomplishing Trinity was made manifest, as the archetype of the image in our soul.[1148] Therefore those who receive Christian baptism after Christ are baptized with three immersions, whereas John baptized with one immersion in the Jordan. To underline this point, Matthew says, "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water" (Matt. 3:16).

5. "And lo", it says, when He had just risen up from under the water, before He had stepped out, "the heavens were opened unto him" (Matt. 3:16). Please make a mental effort, brethren, and focus your minds on what I am saying with the utmost care,[1149] that you may understand the power of the mystery of Christian baptism. For Christ's going down into the water and His being underneath it, at the time of His baptism, foreshadowed His descent into Hades; and, accordingly, His coming up from under the water prefigured His resurrection from the dead.

6. As a fitting consequence, when He came up from the water the heavens were immediately opened to Him. For at the time of His descent into Hades, He went under the earth for our sake, and on returning thence, He opened all things both to Himself and to us, not just things on or around the earth, but highest heaven itself, to which afterwards He ascended bodily, "whither the forerunner is for us entered" (Heb. 6:20). Just as He foreshowed the saving passion through the mystical bread and cup, and then handed on this mystery to the

faithful to perform for their salvation (1 Cor. 11:25, Luke 22:17–20), so He mystically foretold His descent into Hades and His ascent from there through this baptism of His, and afterwards passed on this sacrament to believers to perform that they may be saved. He allowed Himself what was painful and difficult, but bestowed on us communion in His sufferings right from the start through these painless means, causing us, according to the apostle, to be "planted together in the likeness of his death" (Rom. 6:5), that in due time we might also be vouchsafed the promised resurrection.

7. Having a soul and body like ours, which He assumed from us for our sake, by means of this body He underwent the passion, death and burial for us, and showed forth the resurrection from the tomb that this same body might become immortal. He taught us to accomplish the bloodless sacrifice in remembrance of these events, that through it we might reap salvation. With His soul He went down to Hades and returned, making us all partakers in eternal light and life, and in token of this He handed on to us the practice of holy baptism, that through it we might harvest salvation; and indeed that through each of these two mysteries and through both elements, soul and body, we might be initiated into and receive the seeds of incorruptible life.[1150] For our whole salvation depends on these two sacraments, as the entire dispensation whereby God became man is summed up in them.

8. "The heavens were opened unto him" (Matt. 3:16). It does not say "heaven" but "the heavens were opened unto him", meaning all of them, all the upper realms, lest, when you look up at anything in the sky above us, you might suppose there is something higher and more sublime than He who has now been baptized. Rather you should understand and recognize that there is one nature and dominion, which reaches from the space, infinite as itself, around and above the heavens, to the intermediate regions of the universe and our own furthest bounds, filling everything, leaving nothing outside itself, encompassing and embracing all things for their salvation, and extending beyond them all; and this nature is made known ineffably in three united persons.[1151] "The heavens were opened unto him" (Matt. 3:16), that He might be manifestly shown to be the one who existed before the heavens, or rather, who was before anything existed, as being with God, as the Word and Son of God, whose Father was not born before Him, and as having a name with the Father, "Which is above every name" and all speech (Phil. 2:9). For when all those earthly and heavenly things

which appeared to be between Him and His Father in heaven were torn asunder and thrown to each side, He alone was shown to be united with the Father and the Spirit, as He existed with Them before anything was made.

9. "The heavens were opened" (Matt. 3:16), or as Mark says, they were torn. "Coming up out of the water", he says, "he saw the heavens torn open" (Mark 1:10). Why does one evangelist say they were opened, the other, that they were rent apart? That it might not escape those who listen with understanding that the mystery has a twofold character. On the one hand, by saying, "They were opened", the Gospel made it clear that the heavens had been closed to us previously on account of sin and our disobedience to God. For it is written that, after Adam disobeyed God and heard from Him the words, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19), heaven was barred against him (*cf.* Gen. 3:23–24). So it was fitting that the heavens were opened to Christ, who was shown to be obedient in every respect and, as He said to John, fulfilled all righteousness (Matt. 3:15), even through His baptism now.

10. On the other hand, as the Lord's Forerunner said, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3:34–35), and Christ is seen to have received in the flesh all the immeasurable, limitless power and energy of the divine Spirit. The heavens demonstrated in a practical way that all this power and energy cannot be contained in the whole of creation. On that account, when this power was manifested and was, as it were, passing across to the flesh of the divine person, the heavens had not room for it and they split in two. That man spoke well who said to God, "Even heaven is not clean in thy sight" (*cf.* Job 15:15 LXX). By "heaven" he meant the heavenly angels, archangels, the many-eyed cherubim, the six-winged seraphim, and all the other celestial beings. It is reasonable that not even the heavens, that is to say, the angels there, are pure before the God of heaven, because although they are continuously cleansed and illumined by their participation in the Master's highest hierarchy,[1152] they fall short of His absolute purity. Only our human nature, made equal to God in the divine person of Christ, possesses utterly perfect purity and can contain, so to speak, all the radiance and splendour, power and energy of the divine Spirit.[1153] When, therefore, the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ in this way, not only were the heavens opened, but the angels themselves drew back.

11. "And Jesus, when he was baptized went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him" (Matt. 3:16). Luke, however, says that while Christ was praying,[1154] heaven opened. "It came to pass", he says, "that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened" (Luke 3:21). He was praying while being baptized, while going down into the water and coming up, teaching through His actions that it is not only necessary for the priest performing the sacrament to pray, but the person being initiated must do the same at every sacred rite. If it happens that the priest is more perfect in virtue and sends up more ardent prayers, grace passes through him to the one receiving the sacrament, but if the latter is more worthy and prays with greater zeal, God who wants to have mercy – O how inexpressible is His kindness! – does not refuse to give grace through him to the person performing the rite; which is obviously what happened now in the case of John, as he afterwards testified, saying, "Of his fulness have all we received" (John 1:16).

12. Why did the heavens open only to Jesus when He prayed, and not to anyone else before Him? What do you say? While still an unborn babe John understood the dispensation whereby God became man in the person of the Word of God, and not only leaped for joy with Him in the divine Spirit from his mother's womb, but also passed on grace to his mother (Luke 1:41–45).[1155] Once delivered from the womb, he freed his father's mouth from the silence imposed upon it at the command of an angel (Luke 1:19–20, 64). He was a creature of the desert, more exalted than all those born of women (*cf.* Matt. 11:11), more eminent than all the prophets down the ages (*cf.* Matt. 11:9, 11). Yet this man was unworthy to unloose the strap of Christ's shoes (Mark 1:7) – whatever that strap might be[1156] – so how could someone inferior to him in honour be worthy to open heaven, or rather, what lies above the heavens? That you might realize how very much more exalted than anyone else He is, who is now being baptized in the flesh, consider this. When the Scripture says, "The heavens were opened unto him" (Matt. 3:16), this is shown to us in practice to mean that, not merely the heavens, but the bosom of the heavenly Father was opened to Him. For that is where the Spirit and the voice bearing witness to His true Sonship came from. And the heavens proclaim Him (*cf.* Ps. 19:1), opening, as it were, mouths as wide as the world, and making quite clear not just to the angels in heaven but to all men on earth that in essence, power and dominion

over all, the Son of God is equal in honour to the heavenly Father and to the Spirit who has His origin from the Father by procession.[1157]

13. It was right that the heavens opened only to Christ as He prayed, because, according to the Revelation of John, the sealed book, which may perhaps signify heaven which was previously closed to us, could also not be opened or read by anyone at all in heaven, on earth or under the earth, but, "Only the Lion of the tribe of Judah", it says, "hath prevailed to open it and read it" (*cf.* Rev. 5:1–5). The patriarch Jacob taught us beforehand who the Lion of the tribe of Judah is, saying, "Judah is a lion's whelp: from this tribe, my son, thou art gone up: reclining thou hast slept as a lion, and as a young lion; who shall rouse him up? A ruler shall not depart from Judah, nor a leader from between his feet, until he comes for whom it is laid up in store, and he is the expectation of the nations" (*cf.* Gen. 49:9–10 LXX), meaning Christ, who has now manifestly opened all the realms above the heavens, who alone reads the words of providence which have always existed and will exist for ever,[1158] the treasures of wisdom hidden in the Father's bosom, and the unsearchable depths and mysteries of the Spirit.

14. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him" (Matt. 3:16). Do you see that holy baptism is the gate leading those being baptized into heaven? For it does not just say, "The heavens were opened", but, "were opened unto him". Everything that happened to Him was for our sake. Therefore through Him the heavens opened for us, and they wait for us to enter with their gates flung wide. Stephen, the first among martyrs,[1159] bears witness to this before the rest. For when he knelt down and prayed, he gazed upwards and saw what no one had seen before Christ's baptism. "He looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the heavens opened, and Jesus in the glory of God" (*cf.* Acts 7:55–56). He not only beheld unspeakable glory and the place beyond the heavens, but also the one He longed for in His Father's glory, and, by means of this glory, Stephen was blessed to be the very first after Christ to look upon things which no one had beheld before Christ, things which even the angelic orders fear to look into (*cf.* 1 Pet. 1:12). Jesus, for whom Stephen yearned, drew him, wanting him to be the first deacon in heaven, much preferred to all the ministering spirits, as he was also the first martyr in the Christian struggle.[1160] Through Christ the heavens opened to us, and He cleansed us through Himself, for He needed neither cleansing nor the opening of the heavens.

15. John saw too, so that he would be able later to say to those who asked, "And I saw, and bare record that this is the Christ, the Son of God" (*cf.* John 1:34). John beheld the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him (John 1:32). The form of the dove testifies to the purity of Him upon whom it descended, for this creature does not fly anywhere dirty or evil-smelling, and therefore joins the Father's voice from above in bearing witness. "And lo", it says, at the same time as the dove's appearance, "a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17): this is He whom My Spirit, by descending and resting upon Him, reveals now as my co-eternal Son. The Father, using His own pre-eternal and consubstantial and supracelestial Spirit as His finger, crying out and pointing from heaven, openly declared and proclaimed to all that the one then being baptized by John in the Jordan was His beloved Son, while at the same time manifesting His unity[1161] with Him.

16. The Spirit did not only appear as the Father's finger pointing to the Son, but came down to Him who was being pointed out by this finger and, as it were, took hold of Him, and also rested upon Him. "John", it says, "bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him" (John 1:32), and not just upon Him but also within Him – as John again bears witness, saying, "Of his fulness have all we received" (John 1:16) – having been in Him invisibly even before the visible descent. The heavenly bodiless angels testify to this, for one of them told the Virgin who conceived Christ, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee" (Luke 1:35), and another said to Joseph concerning her, "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 1:20). As these events are declared to be not simply a union, but a supernatural, constant and perfect mutual indwelling without confusion,[1162] so God too is manifested to us as one God whose almighty divinity is in three hypostases,[1163] who reveals Himself to us when and as He graciously wills, as the supracelestial Father, the consubstantial Son and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son, united without confusion and distinguished without division. There are two who bear witness, and one to whom They bear witness. They testify to Their own divinity, Their shared nature with one another, and to Their distinctness:[1164] to Their divinity from the dominion that lies beyond all habitation,[1165] by the fact that all the heavens were immediately torn open; to Their shared nature, through Their complete and continuous unity and accord; and to Their distinctness, through the differentiation and relation of the names of the three divine persons.[1166]

17. Because our human nature, assumed by the Son of God, is considered inseparable from Him, it too ascends to such honour that even after He has been made man, there are three divine persons[1167] who are worshipped and bring light, and in whom we believe and are baptized, stripping off the old man through divine baptism, and clothing ourselves in Christ, the New Adam. He made our guilty nature new in Himself[1168] by taking it upon Himself from the Virgin's blood, as was His good pleasure, and justifying it through Himself. He then freed all those born of Him according to the Spirit from the forefathers' curse and condemnation.

18. So what shall we say? Since the only-begotten Son of God did not take a human person from us, but our nature, and made it new, being united with it in His own person,[1169] does He not impart[1170] His grace to each person, and does each of us not receive the forgiveness of sins from Him? How could this be otherwise, as He "will have all men to be perfectly saved" (*cf.* 1 Tim. 2:4), "bowed the heavens and came down" (*cf.* Ps. 18:9) for the sake of all and, having shown us the road to salvation in its entirety through His deeds, words and sufferings, ascended into heaven and drew believers thither? He renewed the nature He received from us for our sake, and showed it to be sanctified and justified, and obedient in all respects to the Father by what He Himself did and suffered being united with it in His person. On the other hand, He has not merely renewed the nature of each of us who believe, but also our person, and granted us remission of sins through divine baptism, through the keeping of His commandments, through the repentance which He bestowed on the fallen, and through the communion[1171] of His own body and blood.

19. And with the Father's words from above concerning Him who was baptized according to the flesh, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17), He made it plain that all those other things spoken earlier through the prophets, the giving of laws, the promises, the granting of sonship, were imperfect, and were neither pronounced nor accomplished in accordance with what God willed beforehand. Rather, they looked towards this present fulfilment, and through what has now been accomplished they too have been brought to perfection. But why refer only to laws, promises, and adoption of sons by the prophets? Even the original foundation of the world looked towards this, towards Him who is baptized below as the Son of man, but testified to from above as God's only beloved

Son, for whom and through whom are all things, as the apostle says (*cf.* Rom. 11:36).

20. Consequently, man was also brought into being in the beginning because of Him, being formed according to God's image[1172] so that one day he might contain his archetype. And the law given by God in paradise was on His account, because God would not have imposed it if it were always to remain unfulfilled. Almost everything said and accomplished subsequently by God was for Him,[1173] and you might be right to say[1174] that everything in heaven, the orders of angelic beings and the ordinances laid down there, were directed from the start towards this aim, namely, the dispensation whereby God became man, to which they ministered from beginning to end.[1175] For God's good pleasure means His good and perfect will preceding the event,[1176] and Christ is the only one in whom the Father is well pleased, upon whom He rests and with whom He is perfectly satisfied, "His Wonderful Counsellor, the Angel of His Great Counsel" (*cf.* Isa. 9:6 LXX), who hears and speaks from His Father, and grants, to those who obey Him, eternal life.

21. May we all attain to that life, in Christ the King of the ages, to whom belong all glory, honour and worship together with the Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY SIXTY-ONE

The Twelfth Sunday of Luke On the Subject Of the Strange Healing of the Ten Lepers[1177]

ALSO ABOUT PEACE TOWARDS GOD OURSELVES AND ONE ANOTHER

EVERYTHING IN THE OLD LAW was symbolic, figurative and shadowy. For that reason, this law considered leprosy sinful, defiled and repulsive, and called lepers and people with a discharge, as well as those who had any contact with them or touched a dead body, unclean (*cf.* Lev. 13:1–15:33, Num. 19:11), hinting obscurely at the uncleanness of those who sin against God, those who assist them and those who mix with them. Lepers are used to represent deceitful, wicked, hot-tempered men and those who bear grudges.[1178] For as leprosy makes the skin of the body rough and blotchy, so treachery, malice, anger and wrath make the reasoning part of the soul[1179] harsh and changeable. Lepers were a means of signifying such passions of the soul, which are far worse than leprosy, and someone with a discharge indicated an immoral person. When it referred to those who touched corpses the law was pronouncing unclean those who have any sort of fellowship with sinners or keep company with them.

2. When the Lord, on account of the inexpressible ocean of His mercy, appeared on earth as man to heal the diseases of our soul and take away the sin of the world, He also healed those diseases which the law specified as unclean. So if anyone considers such illnesses to be really impurity and sin, let him confess the one who delivers men from them as God. If, however, he rightly takes such afflictions as symbols

of actual uncleanness and transgression, let him understand from the things Christ accomplished in respect of these symbols, that He is truly the one who has power to forgive and cleanse the sin of the world. It would, in my opinion, also be correct and truthful to say something else. The Lord exhorts us to seek after spiritual things – "Seek ye first the kingdom of God", He says, "and his righteousness" – and when we look for what is beneficial for our souls and brings salvation, He also promises to supply our bodies' needs, saying, "And all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). In the same way, when He graciously willed to bow the heavens and come down from on high to our lowest state, in order to cleanse us from our sins, He granted in addition that the lame should be put back on their feet, the blind see and the lepers be cleansed, and simply healed all our bodily sicknesses and diseases, as He is rich in mercy.

3. As the evangelist Luke will tell us today, when the Lord was going up to Jerusalem, as He was entering a certain town on the way, ten lepers met him "which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices" (Luke 17:12–13). The evangelist does well to stress that the lepers did not meet Him after He had entered the town, but as He was entering it, because they were driven out of towns and villages as unclean, and lived around the outside of them. They also "stood afar off", since even outside it was not permitted that they should associate with healthy people. They lifted up their voices, meaning they shouted, because of the intervening distance, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" (Luke 17:13). See our suffering, see our shame, see the ugly, disgusting and unnatural surface of our skin, for such is leprosy; see the perversion of nature, men's revulsion, our inconsolable isolation, and in having mercy grant us healing. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." It seems that, although the lepers' words aroused pity, they were not those of men with real faith and understanding, because they call Him "Master",[1180] which is not the usual way to address rulers with absolute power and authority. Their supplication is, however, appropriate to men who are confident that they will receive healing; which would make no sense if the person able to grant purification to ten lepers, and indeed from a distance, were not God.

4. Since in accordance with the law it was impossible for the lepers to be with the crowds around the Lord and so be led to faith by His teaching and miracles, He freely has mercy upon them and cleanses them from leprosy, in order that, once delivered from this obstacle

to associating with others, they might be able both to join Him and change for the better. But how does He make them clean? By saying to them, "Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed" (Luke 17:14). He who upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3) gave them a command, and as they went to obey, He also granted them cleansing. For just as the Master of the law, in keeping the law for our sake, did not call the lepers to Him nor let them draw near, so again, when, after being entreated by their piteous voices, and granting them healing, He sent them to the priests in accordance with the law (Lev. 13:16–17). For the law laid down that a leper who had been cleansed could not bear witness to the fact himself, but had to approach the priests, show them every part of his body, and receive confirmation from them that he could be considered clean.

5. As the hidden meaning of leprosy is sin, the obligation to demonstrate cleansing from it to the priests obviously makes it clear that none of those who have sinned against God, even if they give up sin and make amends for it through works of repentance, can receive forgiveness on their own or take their place with the blameless, unless they go to him who has authority from God to remit sins, show him, through confession, their soul eaten away by the leprosy of sin, and receive full assurance of forgiveness from him. Christ, who fulfilled the symbolic requirements of the law for our sake, sent the lepers to be examined by the priests on this account, but He was also planning something more. For the miracle was sufficient to deliver those priests from their lack of faith in Him. At one time Moses' sister Miriam was afflicted with leprosy. Now is not the time to explain why, but she became a leper (*cf.* Num. 12:1–10), and Moses, deeply grieved by what had befallen his sister, sought healing for her from God through prayer; and he received it, but only after seven days (Num. 12:13–15).

6. Consider how the miracle bears witness to Christ's superiority compared with Moses. When a leper said to Christ, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean", He replied, "I will; be thou clean" (Matt. 8:2, 3), and immediately cured him of leprosy. Here, by contrast, to ten lepers who asked from afar to be cleansed, He granted healing without saying anything, but just by giving His consent. Surely it is obvious to all that have understanding[1181] that it was Christ to whom Moses prayed and whom he beseeched as God to agree to Miriam's cleansing. These ten lepers who had been made clean in this way were

sent to the priests, that those priests themselves might recognize Christ's power through the miracle and so, learning from the lepers that they had come to fulfil the law by the will of the one with such power, they might understand that His will is also the law given through Moses. Thus they might believe in this one God, who is God both of the law and of grace, and lead the cleansed lepers to more perfect faith in Him. It should have been so, even though the priests foolishly acted to the contrary. Although they did the opposite, Christ never left anything undone which might draw them to salvation. His longsuffering and His love for mankind are inexhaustible and unconquerable, and His forbearance could not be defeated by their malice.

7. As the lepers were on their way to the priests they were healed, "And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan" (Luke 17:15–16). The psalmist and prophet rightly said of the Jewish race at that time, "There was none that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become unprofitable" (*cf.* Ps. 14:2–3). If these nine men, although they had obtained such kindness from Christ and seen so great a miracle in themselves, did not understand that Christ was God, and neither turned back to look for Him, nor rendered great glory or thanksgiving to Him, what can fairly be supposed of the rest? The Samaritan, however, who was of Assyrian race – for those settlers originated from there (*cf.* 2 Kgs. 17:24) – and was one of the lepers, understood when he saw the miracle and received the benefit for which he longed. He came to fullness of faith, and returned to speak and perform words and actions of gratitude and belief, publicly prostrating himself at the feet of his benefactor and glorifying as true God the one who had granted him cleansing. The Lord said to those standing round, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God" (Luke 17:17–18). Yet the reason He had healed them as well was so that they might be permitted to accompany those around Him and also gain healing for their souls, and so glorify the Physician both of souls and bodies. They were not, however, found to give glory to God.

8. What misfortune! For we too can be seen to be suffering now from the same calamity. We have been cleansed by Christ from that first curse which covered us like leprosy, but was more harmful and disgusting than any leprosy, in that the affliction passed from the

body into the soul as well. Having been cleansed, however, from this through Christ, and receiving our nature from Him once more as clean as it was in the beginning, we did not cling to Him and offer Him glory by living virtuously, but distanced ourselves from Him again through accursed and unlawful acts. As David says to God, "The lawless shall not stand in thy sight" (Ps. 5:5 LXX). The Lord felt pity for people and, as it were, mourned for them and for us, who came after them and were like them, and just as He asked Adam in paradise, when he fell away from divine glory, "Adam, where art thou" (Gen. 3:9), so later He said to them, "Where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger" (Luke 17:17–18). By saying "save this stranger", He made clear the ingratitude and hardness of heart of the Jewish race, and that, whereas the Gentiles were ready to return, the Israelites were completely unwilling to turn again to be saved. It was just, therefore, that the Lord should also bestow the salvation of his soul on the leper who turned back in gratitude, thus foreshadowing the salvation of the Gentiles through faith, and should tell him, "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace" (Luke 17:19, *cf.* 8:48 and Mark 5:34). As for those who did not return, He reproached them, and made plain, by what He did not say, that they had failed to gain salvation for their souls.

9. These ten lepers are like the entire human race. All of us were lepers because we had all fallen into sin, as the divine Paul says: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace" (Rom. 3:23–24). So we were all lepers, but when the Lord descended from heaven and assumed our nature, He freed it from the condemnation which came from sin. The Jews were openly seen to be ungrateful for this kindness, but those of the Gentiles who turned from their futile path and their previous evil customs gave glory to God. They did not just confess salvation and declare the great mercy of Him who, in the ineffable ocean of His love for us, emptied Himself down to our level, but also obeyed His commandments, conducting themselves accordingly, and, through such conduct, going in peace, that is to say, living peaceably with themselves, each other, and God. We find peace with God by doing what pleases Him, being chaste, truthful, acting honestly,[1182] "continuing in prayers and supplications" (*cf.* Acts 1:14), and "singing and making melody in our hearts" (*cf.* Eph. 5:19), and not merely with our lips. We are at peace with ourselves when we subject the flesh to the spirit, choose to act according to our conscience, and the inner

world of our thoughts proceeds with order and purity. As for peace one with another, this comes by "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you" (Col. 3:13), and showing mercy to each other out of mutual love, as Christ too, just for love of us, had mercy upon us and came down to us for our sake.

10. I beseech you, brethren, let us too be at peace, and give proof of this peace through virtuous deeds and ways dear to God. It is on account of this peace that we have been set over you, Christ's Church, having been made ministers of His inheritance and grace by Him Himself. Before all else we bring you the good tidings of peace in accordance with the promise of the Lord Himself to us through the apostles (John 14:27).[1183] By means of this peace we gather the scattered members, join them together[1184] and cast out from our souls the disease and infirmity caused by hatred.

11. We are united with you in Christ, and we are ambassadors for Christ, who beseeches you through us to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20), to acknowledge your kinship with one another, not just in soul but also in body. By so doing, you will become sons and heirs of peace, which is to say, of God. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition", having abolished enmity in the Cross and planted peace in our souls (Eph. 2:14–15). The entire work of His coming consists of peace, and for this He bowed the heavens and came down to earth. That is why David foretold of Him, "In his days shall righteousness arise, and abundance of peace" (Ps. 72:7 Lxx). In another Psalm he says of Him again, "He will speak peace unto his people, and to those who turn their hearts to him" (Ps. 85:8 Lxx). The hymn sung at His birth by the angels also shows that He came to us from heaven to bring us peace: "Glory to God in the highest", they sang, "and on earth peace" (Luke 2:14). Christ Himself, just as He was completing the divine plan for our salvation, left His disciples peace as their inheritance, telling them, "My peace I give unto you, my peace I leave with you" (*cf.* John 14:27), and again, "Have peace in yourselves and with all men" (*cf.* Mark 9:50), and, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). And the last prayer which He gave us when He went up to His Father establishes our mutual love: "Grant them", He says, "that they all may be one" (*cf.* John 17:21).

12. May we not fall short of this fatherly prayer, nor be cast out from the heavenly Father's inheritance, nor reject the seal and sign of our kinship with Him, lest we also lose our adoption, blessing and discipleship, fail to attain the promised life and be shut out of the spiritual bridechamber of the Father, the author of peace, who, that this might not befall us, sent peace to the whole world through His holy disciples and apostles. That is why they put peace before all their words, introducing their sermons and writings with the phrase, "Grace to you and peace from God" (Rom. 1:7, Philem. 3). We too, as servants of their ministry, bring you the same good tidings, and say to you with Paul, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). May none of us fail to attain to the vision of the Lord, nor fall away from the divine glory which issues thence, but, being reconciled and joined in unity by godly[1185] peace and love and concord one towards the other, may we have our Lord Jesus Christ in our midst, according to His sweet promise. He eases the difficulty of this present life for us, and in due season gives us eternal life and glory, and an everlasting kingdom.

13. May we all attain to this by the grace and love for mankind of the prince and giver of peace, our God and Father the Lord Jesus Christ,[1186] to whom belong glory, power, honour and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY SIXTY-TWO

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY OF LUKE ON THE SUBJECT OF THE REFORM AND SALVATION OF ZACCHAEUS THE CHIEF TAX COLLECTOR[1187]

ALSO AGAINST LOVE OF MONEY

RECENTLY, WHEN THE EVANGELIST LUKE was giving an account of the healing of those who were lepers and blind in body,[1188] we used this as a starting point for our spiritual address to your charity. Today, however, we shall take as our subject Zacchaeus, the inhabitant of Jericho who was blind in soul, and his soul's restoration to sight (Luke 19:1–10). A great miracle was wrought on him, not inferior to the healing of those sick in body. The inner eyes of Zacchaeus's heart were darkened, like the external eyes in the blind man's face (Luke 18:41–42). For, according to the narrative, he too was unable to see Jesus (Luke 19:3), and he was delivered from mental darkness and received sight simply at the word of Him who in the beginning established the sun and illumined the entire visible creation by His word alone. Just as before God had said, "Let there be light: and there was light", there was "darkness upon the face of the deep" (Gen. 1:2–3), so now, until the Lord told Zacchaeus, "Today I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:5), the terrible darkness of love of money had settled upon his soul, and his understanding was obviously buried with his gold in the dark places where gold and silver are stored by those who love them. "For where your treasure is, there will your mind be also" (*cf.* Matt. 6:21).[1189]

2. Let us see first what the story says about him. At that time[1190] "Jesus entered and passed through Jericho" (Luke 19:1). When was that? At the time when He was cleansing lepers, at the time when He was giving sight to the blind and at the time when, because of the renown of such miracles, He was drawing Zacchaeus, as well as many others, to long to see Him. "And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho." The Lord did not just pass through Jericho, but also Judaea and Galilee and, to put it simply, the earth. For He did not come to stay here bodily, although He graciously willed to take a body like ours for our sake, but to pass through and ascend to heaven, whence He had descended, taking our physical humanity up with Him and setting it above every principality and power. However, during the period when He was teaching, He also went through the whole region of Palestine travelling around. When in the beginning He gathered all the daylight into a disc, and set up the sun as king of the day (*cf.* Gen. 1:16), He did not let the sun stand still but made it go round.[1191] In the same way, when He united the fullness of the Godhead with His body, and showed Himself to be the King of all, truly earthly and heavenly, visible and invisible, with a beginning and pre-eternal, He could not bear to settle in one place, but was well pleased to move around until He had brought about enduring, continuous salvation in the midst of the earth, as David declared beforehand, saying, "Our God from of old hath worked salvation in the midst of the earth" (Ps. 74:12 LXX), because the Lord accomplished this salvation as He went about on earth. Just as the sun does not simply circle the whole sky, but only the central path of the zodiac, thus was it also with the "Sun of righteousness" (Mal. 4:2), Christ, who went around the centre of the inhabited world as far as was necessary, passed through its regions, and so entered and passed through Jericho.

3. "And behold", it says, "there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature" (Luke 19:2–3). He was not only short, but also far from Jesus, because, had he been near, he would not have been deprived of the sight of Him, even though he was small. I think that Zacchaeus was both drawn and held back in an indescribable way by Jesus's divine power. He was attracted, on the one hand, because he had a good temperament and a soul capable of virtue, which is why he desired to see Jesus and endeavoured to do so. On the other hand, he was

restrained by God's might because he was held fast by things contrary to Christ's way of life: tax-collecting and wealth. In my opinion, this is exactly what the evangelist is indicating in a few words to those with understanding. In so far as he was someone with admirable ways, Luke says of him, "Behold, a man named Zacchaeus", but as he was caught in the snares of wickedness, he adds, "which was chief among the publicans, and he was rich" (Luke 19:2). The phrase "Behold a man" is used of men of high renown who are not reckoned among ordinary people. The fact that he mentions the man's name has the same implication, for Zacchaeus was not among those of whom David said, "I will not take up their names into my lips" (Ps. 16:4). However, that the evangelist bears witness that he was not merely a tax-collector but a chief tax-collector and rich as a result, shows that he was distinguished for his evil deeds. Being short and far away, Zacchaeus could not see Jesus, "And he ran before", it says, "and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way" (Luke 19:4). See the intensity of his longing, and work out from this what sort of character he was. When he was unable to get through the crowd he did not turn away, but rather leapt forward[1192] and ran, not away from his desire, but from the crowd. Once he was ahead, he climbed up a sycamore planted beside the road, that from there he might see the one for whom he longed.

4. Zacchaeus did these things wisely and in a way that pleased God, spurred on by longing, running ahead along the road, lifted up on the wings of desire and climbing the tree. But what does Jesus do, the enhypostatic Wisdom[1193] of the unoriginate Father, who says through Solomon, "I love them that love me; and those that love me shall find grace" (*cf.* Prov. 8:17 Lxx), "Who even in the roads graciously appears to them" (*cf.* Wisd. 6:16)? He reaches Zacchaeus, sees him first, addresses him in a most friendly way and promises him that He will visit him and stay in his house. "When Jesus", it says, "came to the place" – where the sycamore was bearing Zacchaeus like a heavenly fruit on account of his inspired longing – "he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:5). It seems to me that Jesus was not easily recognizable among the crowd by sight alone to people who had not seen Him before, because He walked along in simplicity, in no way different from the multitude. Also, it was impossible to manage to see His face from a height as He was usually looking down.

For that reason, He who knows the hearts of men also sees the desire in Zacchaeus's heart, looks up, speaks to him and calls him by name, although He has never set eyes on him before, in order charitably to show His face, to make Himself known out of kindness to the man who longed for Him, and to make it clear that Zacchaeus not only loved but was also beloved. Furthermore, He orders him to hurry home, that he might plentifully exact and receive the dues of divine friendship from Him who gives far more abundantly than all that we ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

5. "And he made haste", it says, "and came down, and received him joyfully" (Luke 19:6). Before he saw Jesus, he ran to catch sight of Him, and did everything in order to achieve this, so how could he fail to make haste once he had seen Him and heard Him with his own ears, especially having received so great a promise? When he saw the promise being fulfilled in practice, He rejoiced at being with the one he longed for, and was already tasting incorruptible graces from the fount. The onlookers, by contrast, did not understand what they saw, and "murmured", it says, "against Jesus, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner" (*cf.* Luke 19:7).

6. The tax-collector, however, emulating Him who not only came down to us in the flesh but took away our reproach through His ineffable love for mankind, "stood and said unto Jesus". The fact that he stood is a sign of his firm resolve, bold and humble at the same time. He stood and silenced his accusers with commendable openness, "and said unto Jesus; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luke 19:8). Having thus shown himself to be righteous, he put an end to the reproach levelled at the Lord by those who had complained, saying "That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner" (Luke 19:7). By repaying four times over, in accordance with the law, what he had extorted (Exod. 22:1), he truly turned away from evil, whereas by distributing half his goods to the poor he was doing good and was plainly seen to have been altogether purified. The Lord had said to the Pharisees, "But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you" (Luke 11:41). So now, showing His approval of such actions and finding in them a defence against those who murmured against Him, He says, "This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as Zacchaeus also is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9), as he has now become faithful, righteous,

hospitable and a lover of the poor. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He was actually saying to the fault-finders, "I went in to be the guest of a sinner, but in order to transform and save him, showing him to be a lover of God instead of a lover of money, just instead of unjust, welcoming instead of inhospitable,[1194] and merciful instead of unsympathetic, such as you can see him becoming even now."[1195]

7. Do you all see how Zacchaeus loved and sought, and was loved, summoned and made Christ's own? If anyone is a tax-collector or a chief tax-collector and has grown rich by evil means as a result, gathering money unjustly, let him imitate this chief tax-collector's road to salvation, and let him repay and scatter to good purpose what he has evilly hoarded. If anyone is poor because he has been robbed of his possessions or for some other reason, let him rejoice and be thankful, for he possesses saving poverty, or rather, let him make poverty a source of salvation through giving thanks. Even the rich tax-collector took refuge in poverty, and joyfully found salvation, as we have now heard concerning him. This is as much as we shall say about the narrative.

8. From now on those of you with more acute understanding should pay close attention. The name "Zacchaeus" can be interpreted to mean "justified",[1196] so take this as referring to the Pharisees who deemed themselves righteous, and who, as it were, collected tribute, as the Lord says in the Gospel, "devouring widows' houses, and for a pretence making long prayer" (*cf.* Matt. 23:14). When such a person desires to become acquainted with the truth, he seeks to see and know Jesus, as Zacchaeus tried to do, for Jesus is the Truth. As, however, he is unable to do so, being small and of limited understanding, just as Zacchaeus was small in stature, he goes up into the sycamore, which represents the precise detail[1197] of the law and Jewish customs, supposing that from there he will attain to the truth in respect of both knowledge and practice. Then the Lord, who Himself had followed the way of life prescribed by the law, as though He were passing along a road, sees his good intention and his longing for truth, and reveals Himself to him, addresses him, summons him, and orders him to come down from the sycamore, meaning, to leave the law which does not yield any significant fruit,[1198] and to hasten to grace and a manner of life according to the gospel, from which he can receive God's indwelling and reap salvation.

9. Such a man hearkens to the Word who teaches and calls, like Nathaniel – for Christ saw him beforehand too, while he was under the shadow of the fig tree, that is to say, living according to the shadowy law (John 1:48) – or like the great Paul, who "touching the righteousness which is in the law", as he himself says, was "blameless" (Phil. 3:6), and whom Christ beheld first and summoned. Anyone who obeys the Word when He calls and instructs straightway becomes a Zacchaeus.[1199] He leaves half the teachings of the law, which were formerly his, to the Jews, the poor in understanding: circumcisions, the keeping of sabbaths, ablutions, animal sacrifices, and simply everything that is according to the lowly letter of the law. From the law's words and promises, however, he proves and demonstrates that Jesus is the Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. And if he has at any time falsely accused any believer by calling him an unbeliever, or fearlessly ill-treated him as such, he makes amends many times over by attending to the needs of many believers and leading many unbelievers to faith in Christ. Here we have the allegorical meaning in brief.

10. As Zacchaeus loved money at the beginning of the story – for he gathered gold from taxes and grew rich by keeping it to himself – but later became a friend of the poor, or rather, voluntarily poor and without property, as he gave some of his money away and repaid the rest; shall we now praise this virtue, or speak against that vice? For the length of this homily does not allow us to do both. However, as the discourse is for us who are here present, and I am not aware that any of us is the voluntary possessor of freedom from possessions, but almost all of us give way to love of money, come, let us say a little about covetousness, as time permits, and reveal the destruction it brings, delivering ourselves from it as far as is in our power. The love of money is the cause of all evils: sordid greed for gain, meanness, miserliness, lack of affection, unbelief, hatred of mankind, rapacity, injustice, acquisitiveness, usury, deceit, dishonesty, perjury and everything else of this kind.[1200] Acts of sacrilege, stealing and almost every sort of theft are due to love of money.[1201] Because of it, there are not only robbers, thieves and pirates on the roads, on land and sea, but even in the middle of the city there are unfair weights, fraudulent scales, dubious measures, elaborate clipping and defacing of coins, trespassing, and malicious conflicts between neighbours. Love of money has set nations against each other, separated close friends and sometimes torn families apart. On its account someone betrayed his

country, another his fellow countrymen's camp, an unjust judge the law, a witness the truth, and, first and foremost, each one betrayed his own soul. Thus, according to the holy apostle, "The love of money is the mother and root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (*cf.* 1 Tim. 6:10).

11. But look wisely at the apostle's statement. He did not say that those who were rich had gone astray from the faith, but those who coveted. As he says elsewhere, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and snares of the devil" (*cf.* 1 Tim. 6:9). So do not say, "Most of us are poor. Why are you speaking against love of money to those who have hardly any?" Because of our desire for riches we have this disease in our souls and need to be healed of it. If you are telling me that you do not have this illness, prove that you do not seek to be delivered from poverty, but count it more desirable and honourable than wealth, rejoicing in it and giving thanks to God for it, because it makes salvation easier for you. If, however, someone is rich, let him hear that it will be difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven (Mark 10:23), but let him also be aware that Abraham too was rich, but he was saved (because he was hospitable and a friend to the poor, not a lover of money), and Job, who was tested in wealth and in poverty, said of himself when he was rich, "I did not make gold my strength, nor did I rejoice because I acquired great wealth" (*cf.* Job 31:24–25).

12. It is the desire for wealth that is evil, and, unless they are careful, the poor as well as the rich can suffer from this in vain. Since an evil rich man sometimes takes to himself an even more evil pair of vices, arrogance and trust in riches, the divine Paul writes to Timothy, saying, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in God" (1 Tim. 6:17). For humility among men is the acknowledgement of reality,[1202] but anyone who prides himself on wealth, which is more truly earthly than everything else in our lives, or sets his hope upon it, really is foolish and not unlike those rich men whom the Lord sets before us in parables. Of these, one had Lazarus before his gates but did not even look at him out of arrogance (Luke 16:19–31),[1203] whereas the other conversed with his own soul about the things he had stored up for many years ahead (Luke 12:16–21),[1204] thus demonstrating where the hope of rich men lies. The unquenchable flame took the one, the inescapable demand for his soul the other. Do you see the end that awaits those who are

devoted to wealth? That is why David says, "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them" (Ps. 62:10). As for Solomon, "He that trusteth in his riches", he says, "shall fall" (Prov. 11:28), and again elsewhere he compares those who gape at profits with hell and destruction, saying, "Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of fools are never satisfied" (*cf.* Prov. 27:20). And the Lord says, "Woe to those that are rich! Woe to those that are full!" (Luke 6:24, 25).

13. But let us, brethren, be rich in good works. Let us fill the stomachs of the poor with what we have, that we may be deemed worthy to hear the promised voice and blessing, and inherit the heavenly kingdom. May all of us attain to this by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory, might, greatness and majesty, together with the Father without beginning and the life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY SIXTY-THREE

To Those Who Find Hard to Bear All the Different Kinds of Difficulties Which Come Upon Us From All Sides[1205]

THAT EVIL WHICH IS EVIL IN ITSELF, namely sin, originates from us. On the other hand, what our senses perceive as evil, because it is grievous and painful, can also be from God who, like a physician, uses it to restrain and heal what is truly evil. When those who have sinned can be cured, He tends them in all sorts of ways, but if they are incurable, He even takes away their life for the salvation of the rest. Therefore we are to blame for our own misfortunes, since we make ourselves deserving of cauterizations, whereas He is our benefactor and Saviour in this, as He removes the real evil. Sometimes He exposes the valiant to attacks by afflictions which are not essentially evil, as a challenge. Just as illness was not created by God, although the creature who suffers from it was, so sin was not made by Him, although the rational soul created by Him willingly turns aside after it. This soul was honoured with free will[1206] and independent life,[1207] as without this honour it would have been pointless for it to be rational.[1208] Thus it received a will free from all necessity,[1209] and if it remains attentively in God[1210] and is united with Him by love, it keeps its good and natural life. But if it becomes as though satiated by this sacred residing in God,[1211] turning towards things below and the pleasures of the flesh by veering away from what is by nature good, it falls sick with what is evil by nature, sin, creating death for itself, alas, by voluntarily falling away from life.

2. As we are almost all in this category, and need guidance and advice to benefit us all, I shall now compose my address to you mainly from God's words, so that, recognizing sin as the cause of the universal onslaught of evils, we may leave our sin-loving will[1212] and turn ourselves towards everything pleasing to God. Then, finding forgiveness through virtuous acts and doing service to God, we shall change the Lord's wrath against us into mercy. This is what Moses testified to us, saying, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, I will put none of these diseases upon thee: for I am the Lord that healeth thee" (Exod. 15:26).

3. "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then every good thing shall come to you and ye shall dwell in your land safely, and war shall not pass through your land. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you slain. And fifty of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. And ye shall eat the good things of the earth, both old and new. And I shall not abhor you, but I will walk among you, and will be your God, who promiseth these things. But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all my commandments, but disobey them, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments: I also will do this unto you; I will appoint over you disease and hardship which shall consume your soul, and your enemies shall devour your goods. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: and ye shall be enslaved to them that hate you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me" – that is, by turning back – "then I will punish you", it says, "seven times more. And I will break the insolence of your pride. And your strength shall be spent in vain, made unprofitable by drought, the barrenness of the earth and the unfruitfulness of the trees of the land. And if after these things ye will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall eat you up, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate. And if ye will not be reformed by these things, I will smite you yet seven times. And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant. And ye shall take refuge within your cities, and I will send death among you; and ye shall

be delivered into the hand of the enemy, when I afflict you with lack of bread. And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me, then I will walk contrary unto you; and I will chastise you for your sins. And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons and of your daughters. And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sacrifices. And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and a sword shall pass over you and destroy you. And upon them that are left alive of you I will send faintness, and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from battle. And they shall perish among the heathen, and the land of their enemies shall eat them up" (*cf.* Lev. 26:3–38).

4. Do you see the extent of God's wrath? Yet, "He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil of men" (Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2), though only for those who repent and turn from their wicked ways. "Turn ye unto me and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord" (Zech. 1:3). "Thou shalt turn", it says, "to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; for the Lord thy God is a merciful God; he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, but thou shalt find him, the Lord thy God, an help, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul in thine affliction" (*cf.* Deut. 4:30–31, 29). And you will be afflicted, take my word for it,[1213] not just on account of your sufferings, but also because you have disregarded the Lord's commandments and not kept His ordinances, and so have been delivered up to misfortunes without remedy. In your distress you will seek to be delivered from evils, you will promise to observe the commandments and will show your promise fulfilled in deeds, that you may obtain God's active support. But what are the Lord's commandments? Unfailing reverence and love for Him, purity and chastity of our bodies, mutual love,[1214] not desiring anything that is our neighbour's, nor doing wrong in any respect, but doing as much good as we can, and generally each acting towards our neighbour as we would find acceptable for him to act towards us.

5. But look word for word, if you wish, at the judgment given against those who transgress any of the commandments we have mentioned. "They have moved me to jealousy", says the Lord, "with that which is not God: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people" (Deut. 32:21). Again, "I am a jealous God, visiting the

iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Deut. 5:9), and, "Cursed be he that dishonoureth his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen" (Deut. 27:16), and, "He that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death" (Exod. 21:17); also the son who disputes with his father about what is right: and "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father or his mother: then shall they lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders, and shall say, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones: so shalt thou put evil away from among you" (*cf.* Deut. 21:18–21).

6. But what about those who transgress the precepts of purity? Is not death the penance? "There shall be no whore", it says, "of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel" (Deut. 23:17). The people were defiled by committing fornication, it says, "And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand", and if Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, had not risen up zealously and put both the fornicator and the harlot to death by thrusting both of them with one blow of his spear in the very act of sin, all of them would have been destroyed, the innocent being punished with the guilty, because the transgression would not have been avenged. For that reason God said to Moses, "Phinehas hath turned my wrath away, and I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy" (*cf.* Num. 25:1–11).[1215] If fornication is so strictly forbidden and such retribution inflicted, what will adulterers suffer? The divine law says, "If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die: so shall ye put away evil from among you" (*cf.* Deut. 22:22).

7. But this, you might say, is from the old law. What bearing does it have on us, the people of the new covenant? Have you not heard Christ, the Lord and lawgiver, saying, "I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil", and, "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17, 18). If this is the case, anyone liable to the sentence of death and the other threatened punishments on account of sin, will of necessity be put to death, be shamefully defeated and delivered up to his enemies, and suffer every terror. There is only one remedy invented by the wisdom and grace of the only God and Saviour Christ: to make ourselves dead to sin through repentance. Having ourselves settled the debt imposed by

the legal sentence, we shall then put on, through virtue, the new man in Christ (*cf.* Eph. 4:24), and so be freed from the law, living according to Christ who gave Himself as a ransom for us. If the New Testament had not forbidden this sin, you who are subject to the sentence of death might well have taken account of this in your wish to justify yourselves. The fact is, however, that it forbids not only the final outcome of the sin, but its first beginnings, which are much less grave, and condemns those who have committed these to death, as though they had committed the sin in its entirety. "It was said by them of old time", it says, "Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matt. 5:21–22).

8. Do you see? He declares unjust anger to be equal to murder, placing both under the same condemnation. As for anyone who is so carried away when reviling his brother that he calls him a fool, "he shall be in danger", it says, "of hell fire" (Matt. 5:22). Again, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:27–28). Do you see? Here he equates fornication with adultery, since not every woman has a husband. Or rather, He does not just show fornication to be the same as adultery, but declares anyone who wishes to commit fornication, even if he has stirred up the passion only in thought, through an impassioned look, a full blown adulterer. For He is the judge of the imaginings and intentions of our hearts, and knows the mind within us, having created it most like Himself,[1216] like a spiritual moon and distant light, capable of receiving the noetic ray of the divine light from on high.[1217]

9. As for those who turn the vessel of divine light into a container for shameful, really dark pleasure, and who make the divine temple created by God a dwelling-place for demons and an actual temple of idols through consenting to the passions: what disgusting deeds have they not done, that they should not be named after the most disgraceful of sins, adultery? For if we have all been espoused to one husband, Christ the only bridegroom, as Paul proclaims (2 Cor. 11:2), and have become one spirit with Him, cleaving to His divinity with the noetic part of our soul;[1218] and if we are His members, invisibly united with Him, does it not seem to you that anyone who defiles this

unity by consenting to fornication is a complete adulterer and should be so called? Or rather, that he is something more than an adulterer and far worse, because He has put an end to dispassionate, divine communion with God? Again, what commandment did the Lord give us about oaths? Did He not forbid swearing as perjury, and say it was clearly the work of the devil (Matt. 5:33–37)?

10. But why am I saying these things one by one, when it is possible to summarize them all in one statement? "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" – those who fulfilled the old law – "ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). We, by contrast, of whom more is demanded than of them, are not even like them in our deeds, nor anywhere near them, though we have been taught to exercise self-control even with our own wives – "The time is short", it says, "it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; for the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. 7:29, 31) – yet, we who have heard and believed this not only do not restrain ourselves with our own spouses, but even go after the wives of others.[1219] We, who have been ordered not to swear by so much as a hair – "Neither shalt thou swear by thy head", it says, "because thou canst not make one hair white or black" (Matt. 5:36) – we, then, are not afraid to make oaths frequently by the supreme Head of all, by God Himself and the holy things of God. And alas, our shameless daring has reached the point that the ineffable tokens of the saving passion, the divine blood of the God of gods, shed once throughout all ages for the life of the world – Alas! Why have you not departed from us, O sun, as you did from God's murderers (*cf.* Matt. 27:45)? – is applied to paper like ink to confirm our oaths,[1220] all of which the true Lord pronounced to be the work of the devil. And in this way, woe betide us, we make Him who destroyed the power of the evil one his accomplice!

11. This is what we are like as far as God is concerned, but how do we treat our fellow-servants? Surely almost as foreigners and enemies. What am I to do? How can I emphasize the gravity of this public calamity affecting us all? Almost the only thing we are good at is being jealous of one another and ill-treating our inferiors. The whole world, nearly, has become a pointless sacrifice of our mutual strife. Even if for a short time we pretend outwardly to be at peace with one another, those in power use even greater force against the poor, imposing heavier taxes on those who earn their own living.

What soldier is satisfied nowadays with his wages? Which of the rulers does not long for booty? Those who feed the dogs and herd the pigs tear the livelihood of unprotected people to pieces, like wild boar and bloodthirsty dogs. That is why the poor cry out against all of you: those in authority, those next in rank after them, the army, and those who serve them, being unable to bear the merciless and cruel attitude of the tax-collectors and the continuous violence and injustice of those who are more powerful in our country. And now, the stream of injustice which has been poured out has reached even as far as monks.[1221]

12. So we are amazed that God has abandoned us, that we have become a laughing-stock for our enemies, that every nation has overpowered us and overruns our country, plundering without mercy. We should marvel at God's exceeding tolerance, that He has not brought down fire on us from above, as on Korah and those around him, or sent us alive into hell,[1222] dividing the earth for us and opening up a chasm and a pit, as happened in the case of Dathan, Abiram and their whole congregation (Num. 16:31–35), or delivered us up to complete and utter destruction, as He did on many occasions to many nations which had committed deadly sins. In fact, we have been scourged very little for our sins.

13. Seeing that He chastises mercifully, clearly awaiting our conversion, may we acknowledge Him after our suffering, turn back to Him and, laying aside the works of darkness, may we all come to belong to the light (*cf.* Rom. 13:12, Eph. 5:11–14). Let us love one another and show our sincerity through loving deeds, that God's love may also dwell in us, glorified in action among all the nations who make war on us. Let each of us stop desiring what his neighbour possesses that, when we abstain from all injustice, we might have God's righteousness to help us, putting the ungodly under our feet and making their property our own. Let us cease from terrible oaths, by which we think we are confirming our deeds, whereas in fact we are breaking the divine rule, and so constantly fail, driving away from ourselves the security that comes from God. If we put an end to our tendency to make such oaths, God Himself will be among us, guaranteeing that all our undertakings are advantageous and for the best. Let us make our lives more pleasing to God and chaste, that God, the Father of purity, may love us like His children and lift us out of reach of all harm and corruption, assisting us in every respect and fighting alongside us

against those who war against us. Let us order all our deeds, words and thoughts according to what is agreeable to God, and so, turning back to Him, pure in every way, may we fall down and weep before the Lord our God, seeking forgiveness of our former sins.

14. Then He too will turn to us, cleanse us from all sin, make us whiter than snow (*cf.* Ps. 51:7) and more radiant than gold, and glorify us together with Himself now and for unending ages. In His words he has shown us His love for mankind by many different means: through the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32),[1223] through His sympathy for the humbled tax-collector (Luke 18:10–14 and 19:1–10),[1224] and through His concern for the sheep that, like us, had gone astray (Matt. 18:12–13, Luke 15:4–7). By His actions He has demonstrated to us His indescribable compassion: through the thief who was crucified with Him and joined Him in His kingdom (Luke 23:43), through Manasseh, a king who lived in a most unlawful fashion, but later repented and was accepted (2 Kgs. 21:1–18, 2 Chr. 33:11–20, Pr. of Man. 1–15), and through the mercy He showed to the Ninevites, forgiving a host of sins over many years on account of three days of repentance (Jonah 3:10). He bowed the heavens and came down to us – O how inexpressible the greatness of His kindness! – and made Himself a herald of repentance for us (*cf.* Matt. 4:17, Mark 1:15), teaching us by word and deed how to lay hold of it, and promising to those who choose to follow Him obediently, not just deliverance from evil but the heavenly and pre-eternal kingdom.

15. May we all attain to this, by performing works of repentance in Christ, the giver of repentance, to whom belongs glory unto the ages of ages. Amen.

NOTES TO THE HOMILIES AND INDEXES

NOTES TO THE HOMILIES

HOMILY ONE

1. This first homily was delivered during a procession, which took place either in December of 1350 or in January of 1351, on the third day following St. Gregory's entry into Thessalonica, when the city was liberated from the Zealots (Ζηλωταί) by John VI Cantacuzenus (1347 – 1354). Though elected Metropolitan in May of 1347, Palamas (*c.* 1296 – 1359), because of the strife caused by the fierce politico-religious disputes of the day, had twice been refused entry into the city, once in 1347 and then again in 1348 (see P. Chrestou, ed., *Gregory Palamas: The Complete Works.* vol. 9, in the series *Greek Fathers of the Church* 72, Thessalonica, 1985, pp. 13, 16, and 26–27n [in Greek]; and also nn. 376 and 676, and *cf.* n. 361 below).

2. Besides the prophetic verse of Isa. 9:6, where the Son and Word of God is referred to as "everlasting Father", or as "Father of the age to come" (Lxx), St. Basil the Great (*c.* 330 – 379) also calls Christ Father, as does St. Gregory in this passage, by reason of His especial relation with creation: "For while He is beloved of the Father as only-begotten, He is also beloved of all creation as Father, lover of man and good protector", St. Basil, *Homily on Psalm 45:2,* "Thou art fairer than the sons of men" (Lxx).

3. *Cf.* Matt. 9:1–8, Mark 2:1–12, Luke 5:17–26, and John 5:2–15. See also Homs. X and XXIX.

4. The pool in question is in fact that of Bethesda, on the north-eastern side of Jerusalem (outside the city walls, "having five porches", John 5:2), while the Pool of Siloam, which is where the man who was born blind was "sent" by Jesus to wash (John 9:7, 11), is on the south-western side, within the city walls.

HOMILY TWO

5. The parable of the Publican and the Pharisee (Luke 18:10–14) was originally read on the Third Sunday of Great Lent. It was, however, subsequently

displaced by the celebration of "the Precious and Life-giving Cross" (see Hom. XI), and was (during 7th cent.) brought forward to the First Sunday of the Triodion – so called because only three Odes are sung for the Matins Canon throughout this period, which consists of a three-week prelude to Great Lent, the five weeks of Great Lent itself, and Holy Week (see I. M. Fountoulis, *Reasonable Worship,* Thessalonica, 2nd repr. ed. 1984, pp. 18–19, 34–36, 72–73 [in Greek]). See also n. 20.

6. Gk. ἀκηδία, *accidie*, *indifference,* and Gk. ραθυμία, *apathy, laxity, laziness.* Perhaps "indifference" is best described as "a lack of concern for one's salvation", Archimandrite Sophrony (1896 – 1993), *Paroles à la Communauté,* no. 40, delivered 13 November, 1989, edited and translated into French by Archimandrite Syméon (Brüschweiler), published by the Monastery of St. John the Baptist, Annunciation, 2000), p. 1. This most serious of spiritual maladies is numbered among the Eight Vices by the Fathers, see *e.g.* St. John Cassian (*c.* 360 – after 430) "On listlessness", in *The Philokalia* of SS. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and Macarius of Corinth, trans. and ed. by G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware, vol. 1 (London and Boston, 1979), pp. 88–91; and also St. John Climacus (*c.* 570 – *c.* 649), Step. 13, "On Despondency", in *The Ladder of Divine Ascent,* trans. Archimandrite Lazarus Moore, with an introduction by Muriel Heppell (Willits, CA, 1959); now published in a lightly revised form by Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Brookline, MA, second printing 1991), pp. 95–97. One might well be busy with, and even concerned about, many things, and yet still be neglectful of the things most necessary for one's salvation.

7. The Temple stood on Mount Moriah (2 Chr. 3:1), and so the faithful would literally "go up" or "ascend" to pray there (see *e.g.* Pss. 120–134, called the "Gradual Psalms" or "Psalms of Ascents", in Gk. ἀναβαθμοί, because they would be sung as pilgrims made their way up to the Temple).

8. "Araunah's threshing-floor", where "David built . . . an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings" (2 Sam. 24:24–25), is the site where Solomon's Temple was later built (*cf.* 1 Kgs. 6:1–38, 2 Chr. 3:1). See also n. 7.

9. The Greek reads: ἀποδεκατῶ πάντα ὅσα κτῶμαι. The principal meaning of the verb κτάομαι is to *procure for oneself, get* or *acquire*; and even though it can be rendered as *possess* (as in the AV), the verb conveys the notion of possession through acquisition (see Liddell and Scott, *s.v.*).

10. The Fathers identify the Publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner", with "the supplication" or "prayer of a single thought" (ἡ μονολόγιστος δέησις or εὐχή), also referred to as "prayer without ceasing" or "unceasing prayer" (ἡ ἀδιάλειπτος προσευχή), "prayer of the mind" or "noetic prayer" (νοερὰ εὐχή), and as the Jesus Prayer (εὐχὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ), the most common formula of which, today, is "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me". For a description

of the basic idea behind this form of prayer, see Hom. LIII, 57–60; and also Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite,* trans. Rosemary Edmonds (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Patriarchal Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1991; repr. ed. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999), pp. 123–126, 140–152; and *His Life is Mine,* trans. Rosemary Edmonds (London and Oxford, and Crestwood, 1977), pp. 99–128, in which the Staretz seeks to convey the ascetico-theological ethos of the Jesus Prayer. It should be added, moreover, even if only in passing, that it is precisely the aspect of the Jesus Prayer as "the supplication of a single thought" – the thought being, of course, that of salvation – which still eludes many scholars today, as they seek to trace the origins of the "Jesus Prayer" principally from the narrow perspective of formula and method. The fact that Jesus, "the Saviour", is the focus of this prayer indicates, moreover, that our salvation is not a concept but a person: the great God and Saviour Jesus Christ (see esp. the *Anaphora* of *The Divine Liturgy*).

11. Gk. κατάγνωσις.

12. Gk. αὐτομεμψία.

13. Gk. βαρυπενθῶν.

14. Gk. προαίρεσις, rendered here as *free disposition,* is the *power* or *faculty of free* and deliberate *choice* (*cf.* Lampe, *s.v.*).

15. Shimei was of the house of Saul, the first king of Israel (2 Sam. 16:5).

16. This is a brilliant and succinct "psychological" interpretation of what on the theological plane refers to the Way of Christ (*cf.* Eph. 4:8–10), see esp. the interpretation of "Keep thy mind in hell, and despair not", in Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite, op. cit.,* pp. 208–213; and also in Archimandrite Zacharias' "Keep Thy Mind in Hell and Despair Not", in *The Enlargement of the Heart: "Be ye also enlarged" (2 Corinthians 6:13) in the Theology of Saint Silouan the Athonite and Elder Sophrony of Essex* (Dalton, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2nd ed., 2012), pp. 62–91.

17. Evidently, St. Gregory reads παιδείαν, *chastening,* for the Septuagint's ὀργὴν Κυρίου ὑποίσω, "I will bear the *anger* of the Lord" (*cf.* Heb. 12:5–8, Ps. 2:12 Lxx, Prov. 3:11–12).

Homily Three

18. Luke 15:11–32.

19. The title "teacher" (διδάσκαλος), after Christ Himself (as in *e.g.* John 3:2), relates chiefly to the office of bishop [*The Martyrdom of Polycarp* XVI (AD 156); St. Hippolytus of Rome (*c.* 170 – *c.* 236), *Refutation of all Heresies,* pref.]; implying, however, instruction in the wider sense of guidance in the life in Christ, and is in this sense synonymous with "spiritual father".

20. Originally, the Parable of the Prodigal was the Gospel reading for the Second Sunday in Lent. In the sixth century, however, it was moved to the Second Sunday of the Triodion – which today most commonly refers to the three-week period immediately preceding Great Lent (*cf.* n. 5) – and its place, until the fourteenth century, was taken by the Healing of the Paralysed Man (see n. 119); although this too was eventually displaced by the celebration of St. Gregory himself (in 1368). Interestingly, some of the hymns from the "Sunday of the Prodigal" have remained in their original liturgical position, for example, the Second Canon for Sunday Matins, and also a number of the *idiomela* sung during the services of the week following the Second Sunday (Fountoulis, *Reasonable Worship, op. cit.*, pp. 19–23 and 34–38). See also n. 5.

21. Notice that, according to St. Gregory, man is the crowning point of God's creation. See also *e.g.* Homs. VI, 10, n. 66; and XVI, 17: "Through Christ we have obtained immortality and have been called up to heaven, and our nature is enthroned on the right hand of majesty in heaven far above every principality and power"; but also Homs. XVII, 2; XXVI, 1–3; XXXVI, 2; XLI, 6: "As everything else was made for the sake of mankind", LI, 1; LIII, 55, nn. 884–885, and LX, 10: "Only our human nature, made equal to God in the divine person of Christ, possesses utterly perfect purity and can contain, so to speak, all the radiance and splendour, power and energy of the divine Spirit." *Cf.* the *Spiritual Homilies* attributed to St. Macarius the Egyptian ("the Great", *c.* 300 – *c.* 390), Homs. XV, 22 and 43, XVI, 13, and XXVI, 1, which emphasize man's superiority as the only creature made "in the image and likeness" of God (Gen. 1:26), and the fact that the Son and Word of God became the "God-man"; see also St. Gregory of Nyssa (*c.* 330 – *c.* 395), *On the Creation of Man* III, 1–2; St. Symeon the New Theologian (949 – 1022), *Hymn* XIV, 55–74, where he refers to the life offered to man by God as one which is "higher than the angels", for man has been called "to become in dignity even closer to Him than they" (the latter reference found in Archbishop Basil Krivocheine, *In the Light of Christ*, Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1986, p. 114).

22. The conception of the basic structure of the universe in the Christian Roman empire of the fourteenth century was still largely Aristotelian. This should not surprise us, since it was only in the time of Johann Kepler (1571 – 1630) that the theory of the irregular motions of the planets, explained as a combination of circular motions around their respective axes and at different speeds, was revised. In his understanding of the universe in its scientific aspect, St. Gregory is a man of his times. See also Hom. XVII, 4–5.

23. The universe was understood in terms of a great sphere, which was comprised of many lesser spheres, with the earth, also spherical, at its centre (see Aristotle, 384 – 322 BC, *On the Heavens* 297^{b} 32 – 298^{a} 20). The stars, which occupied fixed positions at the circumference of the universe were (as were

also the planets) fixed at a point in their respective spheres, and carried around by the revolution of the whole sphere (see W. K. C. Guthrie, *Aristotle On the Heavens*, London, 1939, pp. 176–179).

24. Gk. ἔμφυτος νόμος, *innate* or *inborn law*, and rendered here as *natural law*, refers to the moral law implanted in man by the Creator, which enables him to discern right from wrong (*cf.* Lampe, *s.v.* ἔμφυτος). St. Gregory identifies this with the human conscience (συνείδησις); *cf.* Rom. 2:14–15, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law ... which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness". Moral law or the human conscience is to be contrasted, however, with the knowledge of God, which is given solely by divine revelation. See also Homs. XLV, 2, n. 673, and XLVII, 7, n. 712.

25. As a rule, in our text "mind" is used to translate the term νοῦς, *nous*. In Greek philosophy, the mind is the seat of intuitive thinking, of immediate and direct apprehension, and is to be carefully distinguished from "reason" (διάνοια), which refers to discursive thinking, logical analysis, or reasoning as in mathematics. Palamas, it should be noted, like many of his predecessors, is not always systematic in his use of these two terms, and sometimes uses them interchangeably. Furthermore, *nous* has become a source of confusion in English, chiefly because both "intellect" (Lat. *intellectus*) and "mind" (Lat. *mens*) have been used to render the term, both of which over time lost their earlier deeper and richer meaning. See also nn. 32, 82 and 83.

26. We should point out here that in the theology of St. Gregory Palamas, as is the case with the Patristic tradition more widely, there is no room for an "analogy of being" (*analogia entis*), and thus also for a "natural theology"; that is to say, he does not believe that we may come to a knowledge of God through knowledge of creation. According to St. Gregory, knowledge of God can only be attained by divine revelation, which means through direct and unmediated communion with God Himself (see *e.g.* St. John Damascene, *c.* 655 – *c.* 750, *On the Orthodox Faith* I, 1 and 3). The natural theology of the post-Augustinian western theological tradition, therefore, which claims that knowledge of God is obtainable by reason alone, is not to be confused with "natural contemplation" (φυσικὴ θεωρία), which is found in the Fathers, and which refers to the spiritual vision of creation made possible *only* by the grace of the Holy Spirit (see also n. 27).

27. Firstly, the "written law" (γραπτὸς νόμος), according to St. Gregory, refers, in the primary sense, to the law which was given through Moses and which is contained in the Pentateuch in written form; but it can also include, by extension, the other writings of the Old Testament, particularly those of the prophets (although this is clearly not the case in Hom. XLVII,

7, n. 714 below, where a distinction is made between the law and the prophets). However, St. Gregory contrasts "the written law" to the gospel of Christ, which he refers to as "the law of grace" (ὁ τῆς χάριτος νόμος, *In Defence of the Holy Hesychasts* II, iii, 45; *cf.* John 1:17). Secondly, "the law of our reasonable nature" (τῆς λογικῆς ἡμῶν φύσεως νόμος) does not, as noted above (nn. 24 and 26), refer to a knowledge of God *as such*, but rather to man's God-given conscience, to his ability to discern between right and wrong. And thirdly, "the teaching given by creation" (τῇ παρὰ τῆς κτίσεως διδασκαλίᾳ) refers in the first instance to the fact that creation itself, even before the patriarchs and prophets and the written law, bears witness to the existence of a God and Creator (*op. cit.*, 44; see also St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* I, 1 and 3), but also, on the deeper spiritual level, to the fact that when man is illumined by the grace of the Holy Spirit – and so sees created things spiritually and not merely according to the senses – he is able to discern that the whole creation is ordered and bound together in the divine Logos (see St. Athanasius the Great, *c.* 296 – 373, *Against the Greeks* or *Gentiles* 42; St. Gregory the Theologian, 329/30 – 389/90, *Oration on Holy Baptism* XL, 6); he is drawn near to the divine Logos, and perceives that the whole universe naturally and properly moves towards the divine Logos (St. Maximus the Confessor, *c.* 580 – 662, *Ambigua* X (PG 91:1128BD). See also n. 26; and Homs. XLV, 2 and XLVII, 7.

28. Gk. ἡ τῆς γνώμης διαφορά. See also § 12.

29. See n. 19 above.

30. Gk. φρόνησις. See n. 32.

31. Gk. ἡδυπάθεια.

32. In addition to the tripartite division of the soul, the terminology of which may be traced back to Plato, 427 – 347 BC (the *intelligent, intellectual* or *rational,* τὸ λογιστικόν, the *spiritive, incensive* or *irascible,* τὸ θυμικόν, and the *desiring* or *appetitive,* τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν, *Republic* Book IV), St. Gregory also employs a twofold distinction for the faculties or powers of the soul – the "contemplative" (τὸ θεωρητικόν) and the "active" (τὸ πρακτικὸν τῆς ψυχῆς). These terms, however, go back to Aristotle as the two ways by which the "deliberative" or "thinking" part of the soul (τὸ διανοητικόν) operates, *On the Soul* II, 3 and III, 10. But as understood and used in the Fathers, as for example in St. Maximus the Confessor, the contemplative power of the soul is identified with the *mind* (νοῦς), which is the "eye of the soul" (ὀφθαλμὸς ὑπάρχων [*sc.* ὁ νοῦς] τῆς ψυχῆς, *In Defence of the Holy Hesychasts* I, iii, 9 and *cf.* 16), in other words, as the primary organ by which God is seen (*cf.* nn. 10 and 25, 82 and 83), and also with *wisdom* (σοφία); while the practical or active part of the soul is identifiable with man's *reason* (λόγος), which is,

moreover, identical with *prudence* or *practical wisdom* (φρόνησις), *Mystagogy* 5 (PG 91:672D–673C); St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 27; and *cf.* Aristotle's main discussion on "practical wisdom", *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 5; which is nevertheless still governed by the mind. In St. Gregory too, *the active aspect of the soul* signifies that rational or deliberative faculty which controls and directs the soul's non-rational powers. Thus, by the prudent exercise of the prodigal son's reason he begins to see things as they really are. This is an awareness which invariably involves "repentance" (μετάνοια) and "humblemindedness" (ταπεινοφροσύνη). In return for his correct disposition, the son's soul is sealed with the virtue or adornment of the vision of his father – *the seal of contemplative virtue* (σφραγὶς θεωρητικῆς ἀρετῆς) – for it is the vision of God that is his true inheritance.

33. A reference to the eucharistic sacrifice.

34. Bishop Carpus of Thyatira was martyred *c.* 170 at Sardis in Lydia, Asia Minor, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (Roman Emperor from 161 to 180), together with his deacon, Papylus, Papylus' sister, Agathonice, and their servant, Agathodorus. Their memory is celebrated on 13 October in the east; 13 April in the west (*cf.* Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 103, n. 22).

HOMILY FOUR

35. Matt. 25:31–46.

36. Referring again to the fact that, in the liturgical practice of the Orthodox Church, the Sunday of the Second Coming follows the Sunday of the Prodigal.

37. Whenever God reveals Himself, He "comes down" in love to the level of His creature. The verb used here by St. Gregory is συγκαταβαίνειν, which means "to come down" or "condescend", and harks back to St. John Chrysostom (*c.* 347 – 407), who is at pains to underline the fact that though it is God Himself who condescends and conforms to the capacity of His creature in revealing Himself, nevertheless in His essence and nature He remains, and will always remain, unapproachable, see *e.g.* Chrysostom's address *To Eutropius the Eunuch* II, 9; and see *e.g.* nn. 38 (Hom. IV, 3), 103 (Hom. VIII, 13), 150–151 (Hom. XI, 12), 193 (Hom. XIV, 1), 515 and 523 (Hom. XXXIV, 3 and 10), 551 (Hom. XXXV, 16), and 879 (Hom. LIII, 52) below.

38. See n. 37 above, and *cf.* Chrysostom, *ibid.*: "When He wishes to show Himself, He does not appear as He is, nor is His bare essence revealed – for no one has seen God as He is; for at His condescension even the cherubim trembled. . . . Therefore, He appears not as He is, but as that which the beholder is able to see; that is why He sometimes appears aged, and sometimes young, sometimes in fire, and sometimes in a breeze,

sometimes in water, and sometimes in weapons, not changing His essence, but fashioning His appearance according to the different circumstances."

39. Gk. τῷ αὐτεξουσίῳ τῆς ἡμῶν προαιρέσεως. The αὐτεξούσιον is the principle of *self-governance, self-determination* or *free will.* By virtue of his endowment with self-governance, the human person is capable of free choice, that is, of determining his mode of existence. Indeed, this is how some of the Fathers of the Church describe the image of God in man, see *e.g.* St. Maximus the Confessor, *Theological Chapters* I, 11; and St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 12; and *cf.* St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Lord's Prayer* V, and *Homilies on the Song of Songs* II; and St. John Damascene, *On the Two Wills in Christ* 28; and see esp. nn. 330–331 (Hom. XXII, 3), but also Hom. XII, 10, n. 169, n. 214, Hom. XXIX, 8, n. 447, Hom. XLI, 5, n. 626, Hom. LIX, 17, n. 1125, and Hom. LXIII, 1, n. 1206.

40. Notice that the Angel of Great Counsel is none other than the Son and Word of God Himself.

41. Gk. θεανδρικὴ πολιτεία, lit. *the life of the God-man* (*cf.* n. 221). Christ is one person, the Son and Word of God, existing in two natures, the divine and human: the divine, by virtue of His being consubstantial with the Father; and the human, by virtue of His being made flesh "of the Holy Ghost *and the Virgin Mary*" (Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople, 381: emphasis mine), see esp. Hom. V, 2, n. 48, and *cf.* nn. 221, 947 and 1047. That is why He is confessed as true and perfect God and true and perfect man (see the *Definition of Faith* of the Council of Chalcedon, 451). The life which Christ lived during His earthly ministry in the flesh, moreover, bears witness to this twofold character. Thus, as St. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) taught, Christ conversed with the people, sometimes οἰκονομικῶς, that is to say, *as man*, and sometimes *with divine authority* (μετ' ἐξουσίας τῆς θεοπρεποῦς), as God (*Letter to Successus Bishop of Diocaesarea* 171, 6). And as a further illustration of this we have the Gospel narrative of the transfiguration in Luke 9:28, where we first see Christ praying, performing, that is, an act which is proper to His human but not to His divine nature; while moments later, we find His humanity sharing in, and indeed resplendent with, His divine glory, which is the natural energy of His divine nature: "The blessed disciples slept for a while, as Christ gave Himself to prayer; for He voluntarily fulfilled His human obligations (τὰ ἀνθρώπινα). Later, on waking, they became beholders (θεωροί) of His most holy and wondrous change", St. Cyril, *Homily IX on the Transfiguration* (PG 77:1013B). As a result of the "hypostatic union" (ὑποστατικὴ ἕνωσις or ἕνωσις καθ' ὑπόστασιν) of His two natures, there is in Christ an "exchange of natural properties" (ἀντίδοσις ἰδιωμάτων, Lat. *communicatio idiomatum*), which is why it is also permissible to say that the Son of God was born (*cf. Against Nestorius* 2, and *Letters to Nestorius* 6, 3).

and died (*cf. Against Nestorius* 5 and 7, and *Letters to Nestorius,* 4, 5 and 12, anathema 12); and see also n. 689 below.

42. "Works of mercy" (ἐλεημοσύνη), sometimes referred to as *almsgiving*. There are also, however, "spiritual works of mercy", when we speak to others of Christ, see *e.g. Discourse* XIV, 158, "On Building up Virtues and their Harmony", in the *Spiritual Discourses* of St. Dorotheus of Gaza (6th cent.); trans. Eric P. Wheeler (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1977) and also Constantine Scouteris (Athens, 2000); and St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (*c.* 1749 – 1809), in his *The Greater Synaxarion,* for St. John the Almsgiver (*c.* 560 – 619), that is, for 12 November; feastday in west, 23 January. Compare this to the "spiritual works of mercy" found in the western Christian tradition, of which there are seven: (1) converting the sinner, (2) instructing the ignorant, (3) counselling the doubtful, (4) comforting the sorrowful, (5) bearing wrongs patiently, (6) forgiving injuries, (7) praying for the living and the dead; and which are contrasted with the seven "corporal works of mercy", namely, (1) feeding the hungry, (2) giving drink to the thirsty, (3) clothing the naked, (4) harbouring the stranger, (5) visiting the sick, (6) ministering to prisoners, (7) burying the dead, *cf.* Matt. 25:35 ff (see *ODCC, s.vv.*).

43. Gk. ἄσκησις.

44. Gk. ἐγκράτεια.

45. See n. 32 above.

46. The word used here by St. Gregory is "Gehenna" (Gk. γέεννα, Heb. גֵּי הִנֹּם, *gê Hinnôm,* lit. "the valley of Hinnom": the meaning of Hinnom is unknown), which "in the NT . . . is used for the final place of torment for the wicked after the Last Judgement" (*ODCC s.v.*); see *e.g.* Mt. 5:29, 10:28, 18:9; Jas. 3:6). In most English translations Gehenna is simply rendered as "hell".

HOMILY FIVE

47. Numbered among the Twelve Great Feasts, the feast of the "Meeting" (ἡ Ὑπαπαντή) of our Lord, known in the west as the Presentation of Christ in the Temple or as the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and celebrated in both east and west on 2 February, is both a Mariological feast (because it marks the purification of the Mother of God, in accordance with the Mosaic law, Lev. 12:2–4), and a Dominical one (because it signifies the presentation of Christ in the Temple, also in accordance with the law, as also His meeting with Simeon the Elder, when He is recognized and hailed as the fulfilment of the law, Luke 2:22–32). Established at Jerusalem towards the end of the fourth century, it was originally celebrated forty days after theophany or epiphany (on 6 January) – the original date for the celebration of Christmas in the east – on 14 February, see *Pilgrimage of Egeria* (written *c.* 381 – 384). Later, around 534, the Emperor Justinian I (*c.* 483 – 565; Roman Emperor from 527)

transferred its celebration to forty days after 25 December, the then new date for Christmas, and hence to 2 February (*cf. Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie,* F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, eds., vol. 14, Paris, 1948, cols. 1722–1724).

48. As St. Cyril of Alexandria puts it in his *Second Letter to Nestorius:* "Scripture did not say that the Logos united the *prosopon* [*i.e.* the person] of a man to Himself, but that He became flesh", and see n. 1047 below.

49. The Greek term "Hades" (ᾅδης) was used by the translators of the Septuagint for the Hebrew "Sheol" (שְׁאוֹל, *shᵉʼōl,* as in *e.g.* Isa. 38:18), the place or state of departed souls. As a place of waiting before Christ's crucifixion (*cf.* "the spirits in prison" in 1 Pet. 3:19), it is to be distinguished from hell (*cf.* n. 46 above), which refers to those in a state of final damnation (*ODCC s.v.* "Hades").

50. "Paradoxical" because of His two natures, divine and human (Chrestou, *op. cit.,* vol. 9, p. 153, n. 6).

51. Note that Luke 2:36 reads: "the daughter (θυγάτηρ) of Phanuel".

52. The Gk. verb συμβιόω meaning *to live with,* and the noun συμβίωσις, *living with, companionship,* has what one might call "monastic connotations". The term has been used to refer both to the monastic life, as in St. Basil the Great, *The Longer Rules* VII, 2, and to celibates of opposite sexes living as "spiritual companions", St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity* XXIII (see Lampe, *s.v.* συμβίωσις).

53. St. Gregory's reading of Gen. 4:26, referring to Enos as he "who was the first to hope to be called by the name of the Lord" (ὃς πρῶτος ἤλπισεν ἐπικαλεῖσθαι τῷ ὀνόματι Κυρίου), is deliberate. *Cf.* Gen. 4:26 Lxx, which reads: "he [*i.e.* Enos] hoped to call upon the name of the Lord God" (οὗτος ἤλπισεν ἐπικαλεῖσθαι τὸ ὄνομα Κυρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ). See also Homs. LII, 10 (p. 411, n. 796) and esp. LVII, 5–6 (p. 470, n. 1022), where he justifies his interpretation. In Hom. XXII, 7, by contrast, St. Gregory simply follows the Septuagint's rendering.

54. Gk. σωφρονοῦντες.

55. See also Hom. XXXVIII, 11, XXXIX, 3, and LXIII, 6. Num. 25:9 actually refers to "twenty and four thousand", while Num. 26:62 speaks of "twenty and three thousand", but in a different context. 1 Cor. 10:8 has "three and twenty thousand".

56. A metaphorical reference to the river by which, in Greek mythology, the dead are taken to the underworld or Hades.

57. Another river in the mythical netherworld.

58. St. Gregory's mention of the Mother of God in his concluding doxology serves to underline the fact that the feast of the Meeting is as much a Mariological feast as it is a Dominical one. See n. 47 above.

Homily Six

59. Delivered on Wednesday morning, the First Week in Great Lent (Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 18).

60. It is God who willed to bring all things into being, it is He who willed to endow us with His bounties, spiritual as well as physical, and it is to Him, therefore, that all things rightfully belong. St. Irenaeus of Lyons (d. *c.* 202) says "our way of thinking is in harmony with the eucharist, and conversely the eucharist confirms our way of thinking" (*Against the Heresies* IV, 17, 5). Hence, the Christian way of life is *eucharistic* in character, for in response to all that God has done for us we do nothing more than offer back to Him "what is His own" in thanksgiving and gratitude (18, 5). Everything we have, then, including the virtues, is a gift freely given to us by God. See also Hom. LI, 2, n. 772, and *cf.* Hom. XXXIII, 12, n. 509.

61. The ends never justify the means.

62. Gk. ἀνθρωπαρέσκεια, *the desire to be pleasing to men* rather than to God, excessive care or concern for how one is regarded by others, instead of how one stands before God; see also Hom. XXXIII, 10.

63. As already indicated (see nn. 22 and 23 above), St. Gregory's cosmology is, broadly speaking, based on an Aristotelian conception of the universe. See also Hom. III, 5 and Hom. XVII, 4–5.

64. See preceding note.

65. Note again (see nn. 26 and 27) that the knowledge which is referred to here is that of God as He "who created, arranged and ordered" all things. In other words, it is not possible to come to a knowledge *about* God, that is to say, a knowledge of *who* God is, by means of the created order. Creation can teach us merely that there must be a God; and even then, only when approached with understanding – a correct disposition.

66. According to St. Gregory, man possesses the image of God more fully even than the angelic powers (see esp. n. 21 above). This is due to the fact that just as God is Trinity – Mind (νοῦς), Word (λόγος) and Spirit (πνεῦμα) – so it is that man's soul alone possesses mind, reason, and a life-giving spirit (πνεῦμα ζωοποιόν), *Natural and Theological Chapters* § 37; *cf.* St. Gregory the Theologian *Oration* XII (*To his Father*), 1; for even though angels and archangels, as noetic and reasonable beings, do possess mind and reason, they do not possess a body that is quickened by a life-generating spirit. And although God's image

is found principally in man's soul, the fact that the human body is conjoined with, and quickened by, the human spirit makes man superior to the angels, see also Palamas' *Natural and Theological Chapters* 38; *cf. e.g.* Hom. LX, 4: "he [*sc.* man] alone is in the image of the Trinity".

It is worth noting here that St. Gregory also applies his essence–energies distinction to the question of the human soul. Thus, animals possess their souls as an energy (κατ᾽ ἐνέργειαν) and not essentially (κατ᾽ οὐσίαν): "The soul of each animal not imbued with intelligence is the life of the body that it animates; it does not possess life as essence, but as activity, since here life is relative and not something in itself" (Ἡ τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων ἑκάστου ψυχή, ζωή ἐστι τοῦ κατ᾽ αὐτὴν ἐμψύχου σώματος· καὶ οὐκ οὐσίαν ἀλλ᾽ ἐνέργειαν ἔχει ταῦτα τὴν ζωήν, ὡς πρὸς ἕτερον οὖσαν ἀλλ᾽ οὐ καθ᾽ αὑτήν, *Natural and Theological Chapters* § 31; trans. from *The Philokalia, op. cit.*, 4, 1995, p. 359), which is why the souls of animals die together with their bodies. The human soul, on the other hand, exists by both essence and energy: "the soul has life not only as an activity but also as its essence, since it is self-existent" (§ 32), which is why it does not die when the body is dissolved, but remains immortal (§§ 30–33).

Man, furthermore, as the only one of God's creatures endowed with the capacity of operating on every level of the created world (that is to say, on the level of the material as well as that of the spiritual), is thus able to contain and unite all things in his person (*cf.* St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* XLI). "Know ye not", says St. Paul, "that we shall judge angels? (1 Cor. 6:3)." The above, then, serve to illustrate why we have the incarnation, why, that is, the Son and Word of God became, not the God-angel, but the God-man (*cf.* Heb. 2:16, and Hom. XVI, 6; St. John Damascene, *In Defence of the Holy Icons* III, 26; and see Archimandrite [now Metropolitan] Hierotheos Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy: the Science of the Fathers,* trans. Esther Williams, Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1994, pp. 104–106; and also Hom. LVII, 9 below; and see n. 21 above).

67. The AV reads: "a still small voice".

68. Gk. αὐτοαλήθεια.

69. Notice that there is no trace of dualism in Orthodox Patristic theology. The forces of good and evil are not equivalents, not two equally opposing forces eternally vying for supremacy. The tempter is completely powerless before God, as he is also before those who live according to His will, and, what is more, his "time" will come to an end.

70. The First Week in Lent.

71. Note the benefits which fasting (νηστεία) brings to society as a whole. St. Gregory's unqualified references to the city and its people before and

during the Great Fast are thus also interesting from a sociological point of view, in so far as they bear witness to the intense piety of fourteenth century Thessalonica. The second city of the Empire was evidently inhabited chiefly by practicing, church-going Christians, whose way of life had a direct and visible impact on the every-day life and atmosphere of the whole community. See also nn. 114, 117, 166, 180, and *cf.* 124.

72. Because of Adam's sin, we die; because we die, we sin (*cf.* Rom. 5:12–14).

73. Hophni and Phinehas.

74. Gk. καθάρσιον πένθος, κατὰ Θεὸν λύπη, and κατάνυξις.

75. Gk. συντρίβω, *crush, that which produces contrition* or *compunction.*

HOMILY SEVEN

76. Delivered on Wednesday evening (most likely, during Great Compline), the First Week in Great Lent (Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 18).

77. Gk. διάνοια.

78. Gk. μνησικακία. See n. 1178 below.

79. Gk. οἴησις.

80. Gk. ἐπεκτεινόμενοι, from the verb ἐπεκτείνω, *stretching* or *reaching forth, to extend oneself.* A Pauline theme which is greatly emphasized in St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Sermon VI (PG 44:885C–888A).

81. See n. 25 above.

82. Gk. ἀναγωγικῶς, *anagogically*, that is to say, "the mind [νοῦς] is the head of the soul" in a spiritual, mystical sense. *Cf.* also nn. 10, 25, 32, 83, 130.

83. The *hegemonikon* (ἡγεμονικόν) is the "seat of free choice". Originally a Stoic term, it was also used and developed in a number of subtly different ways by early Church writers (see Lampe, *s.v.* ἡγεμονικός). In St. Gregory, it is often used synonymously with "mind" (νοῦς), to denote the centre of man's being, see n. 82, and Hierotheos (Vlachos), Metropolitan of Nafpaktos, *Saint Gregory Palamas as a Hagiorite*, trans. Esther Williams (Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1997), p. 140.

84. Gk. τὸ φανταστικόν, *the imaginative aspect, faculty* or *power* of the soul (see St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 17: "the imaginative faculty (φανταστικόν) is a power of the irrational part of the soul which operates through the organs of sense, which is referred to as sensation"; *cf.* Aristotle, *On the Soul* III, 429^a 2–3: "imagination must be a movement resulting from an actual exercise of a power of sense"). As God-given, the imaginative faculty is a good and necessary aspect of human existence, but when over-indulged it

becomes the root of many passions. As St. Gregory says in his Hom. XXXIII, 10, "there is another all-embracing means of perception within us apart from the bodily senses, imagination (ἡ φαντασία), which produces other pleasures and passions in those who love the world, such as conceit (οἴησις), self-esteem (φυσίωσις) and arrogance (ἀλαζονεία). Further complex passions are formed from a mixture of sensual perceptions and imagination. These are the desire to please people, vanity and pride"; see Anestis Keselopoulos, *Passions and Virtues in the Teaching of Saint Gregory Palamas* (Athens, 1982), pp. 35–42 [in Greek]; Eng. trans. A. Trader and H. M. Boosalis (STS Press, 2004), pp. 32–39. For a masterful exposition on the imagination in the ascetic tradition of the Fathers, see Archimandrite Sophrony's *Saint Silouan the Athonite, op. cit.*, pp. 153–170.

85. "And the king said, But I see four men loose, and walking in the midst of the fire . . . and the appearance of the fourth is like the Son of God".

86. The prophet in question is Habakkuk. *Cf.* Ezek. 8:3: "And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy." Though not included in the Hebrew (Massoretic) text, *The History of the Destruction of Bel and the Dragon* is to be found in the older Greek (Septuagint) Book of Daniel, together with *The Song of the Three Holy Children* and *The History of Susanna.*

Homily Eight

87. This homily was delivered on the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

88. Keeping the faith which those who have become Christlike confessed, enables us to follow in their footsteps. We receive the faith through those men and women who have successfully followed the "way" which Christ revealed to us. The teachings or doctrines of the Church are like road signs that point us in the direction of salvation, eternal union with God. We learn, therefore, from those who have been tried and tested, and who, by means of Christlike humility, have emerged from the good fight as victors. Thus, in Hom. XXXIV, 17, St. Gregory writes: "We believe what we have been taught by those enlightened by Christ, which they alone know with certainty".

89. Gk. γνωστικὴ δύναμις.

90. St. Gregory sees the rôle of the Church chiefly in therapeutic terms.

91. The anathematizing of heresies and the extolling of Orthodox doctrines and their champions, which takes place on the feast of Orthodoxy, is contained in a liturgical text known as the *Synodicon,* originally composed by

Patriarch Methodius I, *c.* 843. It is contained, in a revised and updated form, in the Triodion for the First Sunday in Lent (see *ODCC s.v.* "Synodicon").

92. For the second half of this homily St. Gregory incorporates part of a confession, which he had submitted to the Church while under persecution, *c.* 1342, and which he also appended to his *Letter to Dionysius* (Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 19; and see *Letter to Dionysius* (Πρὸς Διονύσιον), in the critical edition of Palamas' works, also edited by Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ· Συγγράμματα* [*Gregory Palamas: The Writings*], vol. 2, Thessalonica, 1966, pp. 297–299, 494–499).

93. Gk. προβολεύς, *producer, originator* (Lampe, *s.v.*).

94. Gk. ἐνυπόστατος σοφία, *the Wisdom* of God *in His very person*. See also nn. 281, 308 and esp. 537 and 1193.

95. See n. 41 above.

96. Although Christ was in no way subject to blameworthy passions (πάθη διαβλητά), that is to say, to those passions which are dependent upon our will (*e.g.* gluttony, unchastity, avarice, anger, despondency, vainglory and the like), He voluntarily assumed all our natural and blameless passions (φυσικὰ καὶ ἀδιάβλητα πάθη), including hunger, thirst, tiredness (κόπος), labour (πόνος), tears, corruption, His shrinking from death, fear, the agony with the bloody sweat, the succour at the hands of angels because of the infirmity of our nature, and so forth, which, though consequences of the fall, are not in themselves sins (St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* III, 20). See also nn. 208, 209 and 427.

97. As *He Who Is* (ὁ ὤν), God in Himself is incapable of suffering any form of change. But in becoming man, in assuming our created human nature, the second person of the Holy Trinity voluntarily endured corruption (change), suffered, and died (see nn. 41 and 96 above). All of the above, however, as the services of the Orthodox Church continually remind us, must be qualified by the words "in the flesh", for although Christ, who is true and perfect God, suffered as man, in His human nature, He remained "above suffering and immortal" in His divine nature.

98. Because the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Son and Word of God, really and truly became man, we are able to portray His image by means of created elements. By virtue of the "hypostatic union" of the human nature of Christ with His divine hypostasis (see n. 41) we may represent Him by means of materials taken from the world around us. The "graven images" of the Old Dispensation (Exod. 20:4, Deut. 4:15–19) are thus false images of God, referring to the fact that God in His divinity cannot be likened to any created thing, and cannot therefore be depicted at all. But with the coming of Christ we now have a true image, inasmuch as God has visited His people

"in the flesh" (see n. 97). Being true and perfect God, the express image of God the Father (*cf.* Heb. 1:3, and see n. 128 below) became true and perfect man, and so the one whom we now see portrayed in holy icons is the very same God who created heaven and earth and all things visible and invisible.

The veneration of the Mother of God and the saints in icons simply follows on from this: in their imitation of Christ, the saints have become "christs" by grace. Anointed by His Holy Spirit, and having truly become temples of God, they have attained to the adoption of sons, which is in Christ. Thus, they are nothing less than "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ", and herein lies "the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:15–18). See also n. 88 above.

99. See Hom. XI, On the Precious and Life-giving Cross.

100. Notice that St. Gregory does not hesitate to employ specialized theological terms in his homilies, although it is true that the term "energy" (ἐνέργεια) is quite rare; see *e.g.* his two homilies on the transfiguration (Homs. XXXIV and XXXV), where, surprisingly, it is only used once (Hom. XXXIV, 6), and then not in contradistinction to the divine essence, but simply in reference to the "power of the divine Spirit". For uses of "energy", see also *e.g.* Hom. X, 11, referring to the two natures and natural energies in Christ; Hom. XII, 8, where Christ's healing of the demoniac (in Matt. 17:14–20) "demonstrated uncreated, divine, life-creating energy"; Hom. XVI, 19, in which St. Gregory accuses Barlaam the Calabrian (1290 – 1350) and Gregory Akindynus (1310 – 1350) of reducing the visitations of God to "some sort of energy observed in creatures" (see also n. 103); Hom. XXI, 9, stating that Christ's incorruptible body consumed the food it was given after the resurrection "by divine energy"; and Hom. XXIV, 6–8, referring, respectively, to "the twofold energy of the apostles' preaching, which can bring both benefit and punishment", the fact that Christ, in contrast to the saints, "possessed the *fullness* of divine power and energy", and that the instruments of the Holy Spirit share in His energy, though not in His essence (see Hom. LIII, 60, n. 935). See also n. 66 above. Also, it is well to be reminded here that this particular text, as indicated above (n. 92), is part of a confession which had been written earlier.

101. God, from the perspective of the diversity of His energies as well as from that of the tri-personal nature of His Godhead, remains undivided and simple in His Being. This affirmation, however, is non-dialectical, and has nothing whatever to do with philosophical speculation. It derives, rather, from the age-old tradition of the face to face encounter with the living God, as witnessed to in the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and saints. See *e.g.* V. Lossky, *The Vision of God* (Leighton Buzzard, 1973), and his *The Mystical*

Theology of the Eastern Church (Cambridge and London, repr. ed., 1973), pp. 44–90; and see n. 88 above.

102. See n. 91 above.

103. The term "heterodox" (lit. *of a different opinion* or *belief*) is used here as a synonym for *heretic* or *heretical person*. On the one side, St. Gregory is probably referring to the Bogomils (often identified with the earlier Messalians of the 4th – 7th centuries, also known as the Euchites, "praying people"), who claimed that those who are worthy actually see the essence of God in this life, see Hom. XXXV, 17. However, it is also true to say that all three of St. Gregory's theological opponents – Barlaam, Akindynus, and Nicephorus Gregoras (1295 – 1360) – rejected the Orthodox essence–energies distinction in God, upheld by the Councils of 1341, 1347 and 1351 in Constantinople. Thus, for Barlaam, Akindynus, and Gregoras, union with God was construed as a union with the divine essence, which, for St. Gregory, is tantamount to saying that the creature is called to become God by nature (see esp. Homs. XXXIV and XXXV). For St. Gregory and the Orthodox tradition, the essence–energies distinction is vitally important, because it safeguards the Biblical doctrine of man as called to become fully Christlike – "an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ" (*cf.* Rom. 8:17) – not by an essential or natural union, see *e.g.* nn. 37–38 (Hom. IV, 3) above, and nn. 150–151 (Hom. XI, 12), n. 193 (Hom. XIV, 1), nn. 515 and 523 (Hom. XXXIV, 3 and 10), n. 551 (Hom. XXXV, 16), and n. 879 (Hom. LIII, 52) below; and *cf.* nn. 100 and 101), which is unique to the three persons of the Holy Trinity (*cf.* n. 128), nor by means of an hypostatic union, which is unique to the two natures in the person of Christ (see nn. 41 and 98), but by means of an energetic union and communion, that is to say, by divine grace (see nn. 100 and 101).

104. St. Maximus the Confessor, *Letters to Thalassius* XXII (PG 90:320).

HOMILY NINE

105. Delivered during Vespers on the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

106. Gk. πρακτικὴ ἀρετή, *active virtue*, that is, the acquisition and cultivation of the virtues, which may be contrasted with "contemplative virtue" (see *e.g.* ἀρετὴ θεωρητική, in Clement of Alexandria (*c.* 150 – *c.* 215), *Paedagogus* or *Tutor* I, 3; and *cf.* ἀρεταὶ θεωρητικαί, in Origen (*c.* 185 – *c.* 254), *Frag. 45 on John*). Thus, *active virtue* emphasizes the ascetic character of the Christian life. St. Gregory's point in this paragraph is a simple one: knowledge of the teachings of Christ and His Church is not enough; putting them into practice is what is required of the Christian, and this marks the beginning of the way which leads to "the highest Good", in other words, to contemplation or vision of (and so union with) God. See esp. nn. 136, 148, 521, and 876–877 below.

107. This of course is based on fourteenth century medical science, the alchemy of St. Gregory's time. But even so, the description given, from a spiritual perspective, is a helpful one.

108. Gk. Παχεία γαστὴρ λεπτὸν οὐ τίκτει νοῦν: a Greek proverb.

109. Gk. Ἱερουσαλήμ, Heb. יְרוּשָׁלַיִם *Y^erûshâlayim*, or יְרוּשָׁלֵם, *Y^erûshâlaîm*: "Jerusalem . . . is interpreted as the vision of peace", Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* I, 5; "Jerusalem . . . means vision of peace, or raised above death", St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* [= *Subtleties*] *in the Pentateuch*, Gen. 2:3.

110. Gk. ἀρχιμάγειρος, Heb. רַב־טַבָּחִים, *Rabh-Thabbâhîm*, or שַׂר הַטַּבָּחִים, *Sar Hattabbahîm*, originally *head slaughterer, butcher* and/or *cook* (Lampe, *s.v.*). A reference here to "Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard" (2 Kgs. 25:8) – in the Septuagint, "Naburzadan, the chief cook" – who sacked Jerusalem in 587 BC, which resulted in the Second Deportation of the Israelites to Babylon. "Chief cook", however, is undoubtedly more apropos of the subject in question.

111. Gk. ἐπ' ὀμφαλοῦ γαστρός.

112. Gk. μνήματα τῆς ἐπιθυμίας, lit. *tombs* or *monuments of desire* or *lust*.

113. *Cf. Clementine Homilies* XII, 6 (*c.* 4th cent.), where St. Peter is described as living only on bread, olives and occasionally vegetables.

114. The practice of fasting varied at different periods in history and in different parts of the Christian world. In Thessalonica, at the time of St. Gregory, as in Constantinople and elsewhere, it was still customary to abstain completely from food until the setting of the sun, when the faithful would partake of a light uncooked meal, usually consisting of bread, olives and vegetables (see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 241, n. 19). See also nn. 71, 117, 166, 180, and *cf.* 124.

115. Children and the sick are not required to fast. Leniency is also shown to the extremely poor, who, in a certain sense, always fast. See also Hom. XIII, 9, and n. 188 below.

116. St. Gregory is pointing to the fact that, even from a purely physical point of view, the life of the Church is wholesome, and not, as some think, one of self-inflicted flagellation and misery.

117. "Growth" (τὸ θρεπτικόν), the *nutritive* or *vegetative* faculty or power of the soul, which, according to Aristotle (*On the Soul* II, 3), is required for assimilation and reproduction. According to Plato, moreover, "desiring" (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν), the *appetitive* part of the soul, is the source of all negative desires; and the term referred to here as "anger" (τὸ θυμικόν), the *spiritive*, *insensive* or *irascible* part of the soul, is the seat of the noble emotions, *e.g.* those of honour, righteous indignation, courage, and the like; and finally we have "reason" (τὸ λογιστικόν), the *intelligent*, *intellectual* or *rational* part of the

soul (*cf.* Plato, *Republic* Book IV, and nn. 32, 132, 266 and 1179). The context in which St. Gregory employs these terms, however, is fundamentally different to that of both Plato and Aristotle (and indeed to that of philosophy in general). In addition to the fundamental difference that every aspect of the human soul, including the νοῦς, is created by God out of nothing, St. Gregory sees the soul as one single nature (see n. 66), with an interpenetration or coinherence of each of the soul's powers in the others, so that if one aspect of the soul is infected by sin, then so too are the others. Therefore, every aspect of the human soul is to be saved, that is, cleansed and restored to health by "true fasting", which is a spiritual exercise as much as a physical one (see § 8 above), bound up with prayer (*cf.* Mark 9:29), and so must be accompanied by all the virtues, such as peace, love, and righteousness, which are not moral qualities but the very energies of God (Hierotheos Vlachos, *Saint Gregory Palamas as a Hagiorite*, *op. cit.*, pp. 137–140), and thus disclose the life of God Himself. And above all, fasting should be carried out in a spirit of repentance (see esp. Homs. VI, 17, and VII, 5: "Let us fast and pray with contrite hearts, self-reproach and humility, that our fasting and our regular attendance and presence in God's Church may be pure and pleasing to Him"); as it is a means to an end, and not the end itself: "We know that fasting, psalmody and prayer cannot save us in their own right, but carrying them out before God can" (see § 11 below). See also 71, 114, 165, 178, and *cf.* 124.

118. The sufferings of hell are precisely the result of leading a life which hardens us (*cf.* Exod. 7:13, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34–35; 10: 1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8, Deut. 2:30, 2 Chr. 36:13, Isa. 63:17, Dan. 5:20, Mark 6:52; 8:17, John 12:40), and renders us incapable of being healed, incapable, that is, of receiving salvation.

HOMILY TEN

119. Based on Mark 2:1–12, this Sunday was originally assigned to the Parable of the Prodigal and afterwards dedicated to St. Gregory, see nn. 20, 125 and esp. 432.

120. St. Gregory is referring here to the following three Sundays: Meatfare Sunday (of the Second Coming), Cheesefare Sunday (commemorating Adam's Exile from Paradise), and the Sunday of Orthodoxy (or of the "Triumph of Orthodoxy", the celebration, that is, of the Restoration of the Holy Icons in 843), *cf.* Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 255, n. 4.

121. Gk. ἡ τῆς γαστρὸς ἀκρασία.

122. Gk. ἐμπάθεια.

123. Gk. ἀπάθεια, *dispassion* or *passionlessness*, which in St. Gregory refers to the state attained to once the Christian has been purified of the passions and thus has arrived at spiritual freedom, see *e.g.* *In Defence of the Holy Hesychasts* II, ii, 19; *cf.* also 22–23, and III, iii, 15; found in Keselopoulos, *Passions and Virtues*,

op. cit., pp. 176–177 [Greek]; pp. 168–170 [English]; and see *e.g.* St. Maximus the Confessor, *Two Hundred Texts on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of God: Written for Thalassius, First Century on Theology* 32.

124. The Saturdays and Sundays of Lent are not, strictly speaking, part of the Great Fast. This is indicated, *inter alia,* by the celebration of the full Liturgy, the commemoration of the saints, and the relaxation of the strict rules of fasting. (Note that Holy and Great Saturday, the only Saturday in the year for which fasting is prescribed, belongs to Holy Week – a distinct liturgical unit – and not to Great Lent, see n. 5.) Thus, both wine and oil (meaning olive oil) are allowed on these Saturdays and Sundays.

125. The Gospel reading for the Third Sunday after Pascha (Easter), of the Paralytic (John 5:1–15), for which no homily survives in this collection. See n. 432 below.

126. Gk. ἀνεπιφθόνως, lit. *without enmity.*

127. The MS reads: "the ruler of the synagogue" (Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 262).

128. Notice the two significantly distinct ways in which the *homoousion* is used here: "of one substance with the Father" (ὁμοούσιος τῷ Πατρί), refers to the fact that though distinct from the Father in His hypostasis, the Son (as also is the case with the Holy Spirit) possesses and contains fully the same one divine nature, and so the three divine persons of the Holy Trinity are one God, one Being (*cf.* n. 103); while the phrase "of one substance with your ungrateful selves" (ὁμοούσιος ὑμῖν τοῖς ἀχαρίστοις), which refers to us human beings, is employed in a generic sense, relating therefore to the fact that the Son and Word of God has the nature which is common to each and every human being and possessed individually.

129. See nn. 41, 96, 97 and 100.

130. That is to say, in a spiritual way, as befits God, *cf.* n. 82.

131. Gk. ἡδυπάθεια, *cf.* n. 31.

132. The λογιστικόν is located in the head. See esp. n. 117.

HOMILY ELEVEN

133. Celebrated on the Third Sunday in Lent (see nn. 5 and 20), this homily has as its theme "the cross before the Cross". It is not to be confused with the commemoration of the "Elevation" or "Exaltation of the Cross", which is celebrated on 14 September.

134. *Cf.* "Abba Milesius" (4th – 5th cent.), § 2, in *Apophthegmata Patrum: The Alphabetical Collection,* also known in English as *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers.*

135. *Cf.* St. Dorotheus of Gaza, *Spiritual Discourse* I, 13–14, "On Renunciation", *op. cit.*

136. Gk. θεωρία τοῦ Θεοῦ, *contemplation* or *vision of God*. In St. Gregory, this denotes nothing less than the vision of Christ in glory. And as he makes clear in § 8 below, where this important qualification is made again, in the same context and with the same words, the vision of Christ in glory is in fact the vision of the glory of the Cross: "such contemplation is also the mystery of the Cross". See also nn. 148, 521, 876–877 below.

137. Gk. πρακτική, refers to the *practical* or *active life*, to *ascetic action*, and is a favourite term used to denote the first stage in the Christian's progress towards perfection (found in Origen, *e.g.* *On Psalms 2:12* and *39:11*, in Evagrius Ponticus (346 – 399), *e.g.* in his *Practicus* 78, but also in St. Maximus the Confessor, *e.g.* *Ambigua* X, PG 91:1156AB). As indicated above (see n. 106), πρακτική in Palamas consists of the cleansing or purification of the passions, and also the acquisition and cultivation of the virtues. *Cf.* also nn. 32 and 136.

138. Gk. μελέτη, carries with it the notion of *study* in the sense of *application* or *the practice of*, and can be found used in this sense as early as Plato's *Phaedo* 67D.

139. Gk. θέρμη, *warmth* or *fervour*. According to St. Gregory the Sinaïte (*c.* 1265 – 1346), there are three kinds of fervour: the first is "prompted by grace", the second, "by delusion or sin", and the third, "by an excess of blood" (see "On the Different Kinds of Energy", § 8, in *The Philokalia*, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 261). Of the first kind, the Sinaïte says: "let our aim be to make the energy of prayer alone active in our hearts, for it brings warmth and joy to the intellect [νοῦς], and sets the heart alight with an ineffable love for God and man" (in "On How to Discover the Energy of the Holy Spirit", § 3, *ibid.*, p. 259). Great care must be taken, however, since the "warmth" which is born of delusion or sin is produced by the demons, see *e.g.* "On Stillness", § 10, *ibid.*, p. 271.

140. See "Abba Arsenius" (*c.* 360 – 449), § 9, in *Apophthegmata Patrum: The Alphabetical Collection*.

141. Gk. τὸ θεωρητικόν, see n. 32.

142. Gk. τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν, see nn. 32 and 117.

143. See § 7 above.

144. The word used by St. Gregory here is τρισυπόστατον, which literally means *tri-hypostatic*, *of three hypostases*; hypostasis (ὑπόστασις) being the richer theological term used by the Fathers from the fourth century onwards to express the diversity within the Holy Trinity. It was thanks to the work of the great Cappadocian Fathers, that is, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. Gregory of Nyssa, that this term, which until then was virtually synonymous with essence, came to be used exclusively in order to refer to the "threeness" in God. Because the term person (πρόσωπον), since the fourth century synonymous with that of hypostasis, is today understood

rather in terms which relate to modern psychology, theologians often prefer to employ the term hypostasis, which has remained free of the connotations that the term person carries with it.

145. The AV, which follows the Massoretic text, reads "in the plains of Mamre" (Gen. 18:1).

146. Gk. ὁ εἷς Θεὸς τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις. *Cf.* n. 144.

147. See also Hom. XIX, 4, and compare the case of Ephraim and Manasseh.

148. Gk. θεοπτία, *vision of God*; synonymous with θεωρία, see nn. 136 above and 521, 876–877 below.

149. Barlaam the Calabrian, Gregory Akindynus and Nicephorus Gregoras, each of whom, owing to the fact that they did not accept the Orthodox distinction between the uncreated essence or nature of God and His uncreated energies or grace, subscribed to the belief that the "face to face" vision of God is impossible in this life. See also nn. 100 and 103.

In this respect, moreover, they resemble the post-Augustinian theological tradition of the Latin west, according to which God comes into contact with the world only by means of "supernatural" but created effects and symbols (the probable exceptions to this rule, according to Thomas Aquinas (*c.* 1225 – 1274) being Moses, Exod. 34:28–35, and St. Paul, 2 Cor. 12:2–4). Here too, no distinction is made between essence and energy in God, and so they are in effect identified with each other. Therefore, for post-Augustinian Latin theology, "real" contact with God Himself must mean contact with His divine essence or substance. And this, the Beatific Vision, which is understood in terms of intellection or "sure knowledge", is not given in this world, not *in via,* but in the world to come, *in patria.* Thus St. Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430), in *e.g. On the Trinity* IX, i, 1 says that "sure knowledge will not be perfected till after this life when we shall see face to face"; and *cf.* Thomas Aquinas, who also maintains that the absolute incomprehensibility of God does not preclude a partial knowledge of the divine essence, as in *Summa Theologiae* I, q. xii, a. 7. For St. Gregory, however, as for the Orthodox tradition as a whole, the divine essence will always remain unknowable, in this life and in the next, both to men and angels; which simply means that we have been called to become gods, not by nature but by grace, and the one to whom glory and thanksgiving must be rendered will always remain the same – the holy, consubstantial, life-giving and undivided Trinity, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. See also nn. 37, 38, 100, 101, 103 above, and 151 below.

150. The "energy and grace" of God is nothing less than the whole life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which we have all been called to receive and contain. As St. Basil the Great explains, in his *Letter* 234, 1, this is that aspect of God's Being which is revealed to us: "We know our God from his energies,

but we do not claim to draw near to his essence, for his energies come down to us but his essence remains unknowable"; and see esp. St. Gregory's Hom. VIII, 10 above, and also *e.g.* nn. 37–38 (Hom. IV, 3), 103 (Hom. VIII, 13), 151 (Hom. XI, 12), 193 (Hom. XIV, 1), 515 and 523 (Hom. XXXIV, 3 and 10), 551 (Hom. XXXV, 16), and 879 (Hom. LIII, 52). And *cf.* nn. 100, 101, 117 and 149.

151. See esp. St. Gregory's Hom. XXXV, 16, where he quotes his namesake, St. Gregory the Theologian, almost word for word: "But neither those whom we have just mentioned, nor any one else belonging to their ranks [*viz.* of the prophets and saints] has either stood in the substance and essence of the Lord (ἐν ὑποστήματι καὶ οὐσίᾳ Κυρίου), as the Scripture says (*cf.* Jer. 23:18 Lxx), or seen or declared the nature of God (οὐδὲ Θεοῦ φύσιν ἢ εἶδεν ἢ ἐξηγόρευσεν)," *Oration* XXVIII, 19; and *cf.* St. Germanus of Constantinople (*c.* 640 – *c.* 733), *Oration* II, *On Great Saturday* (PG 98:261A). See also nn. 149 and 150 above.

152. Gk. τύπος, *type* or *figure,* refers to prophetic prefigurations or foreshowings of the different aspects of the mystery which becomes reality in Jesus Christ. As St. Gregory also says in this same paragraph, "These men prefigured the truth that was to come, but were not themselves this truth."

153. Gk. τῆς θεότητος τὸ ἀπαθές, *the impassible* nature *of* His *divinity.* Although it is impossible for God to suffer, nevertheless, the second person of the Holy Trinity did so, in His human nature, see nn. 41 and 97.

154. Note Exod. 17:12 in the Septuagint, where the first letters of the names of the two men who held up Moses' arms during the battle with Amalek, Aaron and Hur (Gk. Ὤρ), are also seen in a prophetic light, as prefiguring Christ who is the Alpha and the Omega (Rev. 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13). This symbolism is also carried over into Orthodox iconography.

155. Gk. τοῖς σῳζομένοις, lit. *to those who are being saved,* is significant, as it identifies salvation as a dynamic state – one, that is, which is still very much in progress – and not a static one, and as such demands the will on the part of the individual to be initiated, throughout one's life, into the mystery of repentance, and to learn, ever more deeply, the humility of Christ.

156. Gk. ψυχή, *soul,* which in this context simply means *life,* and is translated as such by the AV. And so, St. Gregory is referring here to losing one's physical life but gaining one's spiritual life, which, it is important to note, clearly includes the human body.

157. Note that the original Greek is even stronger: καὶ ζημιωθῆναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ, that is, "and *harm* his own soul". Thus, possessing the whole world, which is ephemeral, cannot be compared even to harming one's own soul, which has been created for eternity.

158. The reason why St. Gregory and all the Fathers of the Church constantly point us in the direction of Christlike perfection and humility is because, without this vision for us to strive towards, the way to true repentance would be closed to us, and our Christianity would be in danger of degenerating into a wishy-washy moral relativism.

159. In another MS the paragraph closes thus: "that this is a fleshly thought, and that is why it moves as it does. By contrast, a thought nailed to the Cross cannot bend in such a direction. So we must take the thought up to the height of the Cross, to stop it throwing itself down and being separated from Christ crucified" (see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 313).

160. Gk. ταπεινοφροσύνη, *humbleness of mind, humblemindedness,* or *lowly in heart.*

161. As the saints of both the Old and New Dispensation clearly show, union and communion with God, otherwise referred to as the vision of God and deification (θέωσις), begins in this life and continues in the next. The life in Christ, moreover, as St. Gregory of Nyssa says, is an unending journey towards perfection (*Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Sermon XII: "he who wishes to see God, will see his Beloved only by constantly following after Him, and the contemplation of His face is really the unending journey towards Him"; trans. J. Daniélou and H. Musurillo, *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings,* Crestwood, NY, 1979, p. 263). However, God's blessings, to which St. Gregory here alludes, are mostly hidden, and outwardly can even appear as curses; and this is, of course, the mystery of the Cross: "to be victorious through weakness, exalted through humility, rich through poverty" (§ 25 below).

162. Like St. Paul, St. Gregory refers to the pagans of the Hellenistic or Graeco-Roman world as "Greeks", which is in fact how they referred to themselves. Hence, the famous treatise *Against the Greeks* (better known as *Against the Gentiles*) by St. Athanasius the Great, who actually regarded himself as a Roman, that is to say, as an Orthodox Christian citizen of the Christian Roman Empire.

163. For Scriptural references to "the Lord of glory", see 1 Cor. 2:8 and Jas. 2:1; to "the God of glory", see Ps. 29:3 and Acts 7:2; and *cf.* "the Father of glory", Eph. 1:17; and also "the spirit of glory", 1 Pet. 4:14.

164. The AV reads: "we will worship at his footstool".

Homily Twelve

165. "The Subject of the Gospel Reading for that Day" (Mark 9:17–31, *cf.* Matt. 17:14–21, Luke 9:37–43). As St. Gregory indicates in § 3 below, this was the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent in his own day:

"Since it is customary on this Sunday of the fast to read about this miracle in church, let us start from the beginning and go through the whole of the Gospel passage which recounts it." Formerly assigned to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25–37), the Fourth Sunday in Lent was eventually dedicated to St. John Climacus (whose actual feastday was 30 March, which often fell within Great Lent). Now, it is clear enough that the practice of reading the Gospel narrative of the Healing of the Boy with a Demon must have already superseded the Parable of the Good Samaritan by St. Gregory's time (having taken place somewhere between the sixth and fourteenth centuries), as it is explicitly referred to as the received liturgical custom of his day. Thus, the dedication of the Fourth Sunday in Lent to St. John Climacus must have been a relatively late development, which took place not long after St. Gregory's repose (in 1359), and probably at around the time that his own memory was assigned to the Second Sunday in Lent, that is to say, in or shortly after 1368. See also nn. 5, 20, 133, and *cf.* 91 and 124.

166. Notice the significance of the voluntary nature of the toil of fasting. Because our fasting is voluntary, it is in harmony with Christ's voluntary passion, and as such brings us into the stream of Christ's life. As St. Gregory explains in Hom. XVI, 33–35 (*cf.* also Hom. XIII, 8), by voluntarily undergoing all manner of trials and tribulations in response to what Christ has done for us, we too are justified, and in our person condemn death as unjust. In this way, our very death becomes innocent and voluntary, as was that of Christ (*cf.* St. Maximus the Confessor, *Letters to Thalassius* LXI (PG 90:625–645).

167. St. Gregory displays here a remarkable knowledge of the medical science of his day.

168. Here, St. Gregory touches upon the mystery of the two natures in Christ, the divine and human, each of which possesses its own natural will and energy (see the *Dogmatic Decree* of Constantinople III, the Sixth Ecumenical Council, 680 – 681). It is by virtue of His two natural wills and energies, that we see Christ acting or operating in a way which is proper to human existence, while at the same time acting or operating in a way which is characteristic only of God, thereby revealing the fact that He is the second divine person of the Holy Trinity, consubstantial with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. See also nn. 41, 128, 201, 689.

169. Gk. τὸ αὐτεξούσιον, see n. 39 (Hom. IV, 8).

170. Gk. τὴν ἔνδον οἰκουροῦσαν τῆς ψυχῆς καθαίρειν ἐνέργειαν. *Cf. e.g.* St. Macarius the Egyptian, *On the Elevation of the Mind* 20 (PG 34:905C): οἰκουρεῖ γὰρ ἐν τῷ νῷ τούτων ἡ κακία πολλάκις; St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs* V (exegesis of S. of S. 2:9) (PG 44:864C): ἔνδον οἰκουροῦσαν τὴν νύμφην (found in Lampe, *s.v.* οἰκουρέω).

171. Gk. προσοχή.

172. Gk. μνήμη θανάτου.

173. Gk. τῆς κατὰ Θεὸν λύπης καὶ τοῦ πένθους.

174. See n. 140.

175. Gk. ὁ νοῦς καὶ ἡ διάνοια. See also nn. 25, 32, 66 and 83.

176. Gk. φέγγος νοερόν.

Homily Thirteen

177. The Fifth Sunday in Lent was formerly dedicated to the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), and later, probably by the end of the fourteenth century, assigned to St. Mary of Egypt (5th cent.). A model of repentance, St. Mary's commemoration was moved from 1 April, which would often fall in the Lenten period, during which time the celebration of the saints was forbidden (Canon 51, Council of Laodicea, 4th cent.) – although there are such notable exceptions as the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (*c.* 320; feastday in the east, 9 March, in the west, formerly 10 March). See also nn. 5, 20, 91, 124 and 165.

178. Gk. πνευματικοὶ διδάσκαλοι, that is to say, those who are experienced in "the things pertaining to the difficult work of virtue and the ascetic art", St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Catechetical Sermons* (*Catecheses*) XX, 3–6; Eng. trans. C. J. deCatanzaro (1980). *Cf.* n. 19.

179. Gk. συνηλικιῶτις οὖσα [*sc.* ἡ νηστεία] τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως. Note that Gk. συνηλικιῶτις, ἡ, is fem. of συνηλικιώτης, ὁ. *one as old as, of the same age as* (*cf.* Lampe, *s.v.* συνηλικιῶτις). Opp. here to ἀκρασιά, *self-indulgence.*

180. Fasting is a means and not an end in itself. The aim of fasting, as with all the means that the Church places at our disposal, is to help us to attain to Christlike perfection and humility. And so it is possible to fast very strictly and yet not attain to such perfection. As St. John Cassian relates, in his *On the Holy Fathers of Sketis,* Abba Moses (*c.* 330 – *c.* 405) warns, "Fasts and vigils, the study of Scripture, renouncing possessions and everything worldly are not in themselves perfection . . . they are tools. For perfection . . . is acquired through them. It is useless, therefore, to boast of our fasting, vigils, poverty, and reading of Scripture when we have not achieved the love of God and our fellow men" (trans. from *The Philokalia, op. cit.,* vol. 1, p. 96). Note also the advice that St. Symeon the New Theologian receives from his own spiritual father, St. Symeon the Devout (9th – 10th cent.), in *Catechetical Sermons, op. cit.,* XVI, 54–57: "Know this, my child, that neither fasting, nor vigil, nor physical toil, nor any other ascetic feat causes God to rejoice and appear to

us, but only a humble, simple and good soul and heart". And see also nn. 71, 114, 115, 117 and 166 above.

181. See *e.g.* St. John Cassian, in his "On Control of the Stomach", "Stop eating while still hungry and do not continue until you are satisfied" (in *On the Eight Vices,* trans. from *The Philokalia. op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 74); and see also St. John Climacus, Step 14: "On Gluttony", in *The Ladder of Divine Ascent:* "When sitting at a table laden with food, remember death and judgment, for even so you will only check the passion slightly. In taking drink, do not cease to imagine the vinegar and gall of your Lord. And you will certainly either be temperate, or you will sigh and humble your mind" (*op. cit.*, pp. 101–102); and *cf.* the criterion of St. Silouan the Athonite (1866 – 1938), which goes to the heart of the matter: "It is my belief that one must eat just so much that after a meal one feels like praying – eat in such wise that one's spirit perpetually burns and reaches out insatiable towards God, day and night" (Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite. op. cit.*, p. 499).

182. See *e.g.* St. John Climacus, *op. cit.*, p. 99: "Evagrius, afflicted by an evil spirit, imagined himself to be the wisest of the wise both in thought and expression. But he was deceived, poor man, and proved to be the most foolish of fools in this among other things. For he says: 'When our soul desires different foods, then confine it to bread and water.' To prescribe this is like saying to a child: 'Go up the whole ladder in one stride.' And so, rejecting his rule, let us say: When our soul desires different foods, it is demanding what is proper to its nature. Therefore, let us also use cunning against our unscrupulous foe. And unless a very severe conflict is on us, or amends for falls, let us for a while only deny ourselves fattening foods, then heating foods, and only then what makes our food pleasant. If possible, give your stomach satisfying and digestible food, so as to satisfy its insatiable hunger by sufficiency, and so that we may be delivered from excessive desire, as from a scourge, by quick assimilation. If we look into the matter, we shall find that most of the foods which inflate the stomach also excite the body."

183. Gk. ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς κάθαρσις, *the purification of the soul.* In the highly influential writings of St. Dionysius the Areopagite (*c.* 500), *purification* (κάθαρσις) is the first stage in the Christian's progress towards perfection, which consists in the cleansing of the passions and the cultivation of the virtues (see nn. 106 and 137). The other two stages are, respectively, "illumination" (φωτισμός), and "perfection" (τελείωσις) or "union" (ἕνωσις), otherwise known as "deification" (θέωσις). There are, however, variations to this schema, as in *e.g.* Origen and Evagrius, both of whom refer to the first two stages as the "active life" or "ascetic action" (πρακτική) and "natural contemplation" (φυσική), differing only in the terms they use to denote the third and final stage: Origen, uses the term "spiritual insight" (ἐνοπτική); Evagrius, "theology" (θεολογία);

and St. Maximus the Confessor, who combines the terminology of Origen and Evagrius with that of St. Dionysius, sometimes employing a schema based on the former ("ascetic action", πρακτική, "knowledge", γνῶσις, and "contemplation", θεωρία), and sometimes employing that of the latter. Essentially, however, they all point to the fact that there is a beginning, an end, and an intermediate stage in the life in Christ, and the Church helps us to pass from the one to the next until we reach Christlike perfection, which is dynamic and unending (see n. 161). See also nn. 123, 136, 148, 521, and nn. 876–877; and esp. Hom. XVI, 34.

184. Once again, St. Gregory's description of the physiological effects of excessive eating and drinking is couched in the medical terms of his own times (see also Homs. IX, 3 and XII, 4).

185. *Cf.* n. 115 above.

186. *Cf.* Hom. XII, 2, and n. 166.

187. See *ibid.*, and Hom. XVI, 33–35 (as also § 8 above).

188. A practice which was still very much in evidence in certain parts of the Orthodox world (in Cyprus, for instance) as late as the years immediately following World War II. See also n. 115.

189. Gk. φιλαυτία, *love of one's self, self-love,* is identified by St. Maximus the Confessor as the mother of all passions and attachment to the body: "He who drives out self-love, the mother of the passions, will with God's help easily rid himself of the rest, such as anger, irritability, rancour and so on. But he who is dominated by self-love is overpowered by the other passions, even against his will. Self-love is the passion of attachment to the body" (*Second Century on Love* 8, in *The Philokalia, op. cit.*, vol. 2, repr. ed. 1984, p. 66); and also: "Self-love is an impassioned, mindless love for one's body. Its opposite is love and self-control. A man dominated by self-love is dominated by all the passions" (*ibid., Third Century on Love* 8, p. 84). Pressed to its logical conclusion, of course, φιλαυτία is nothing less than Luciferian.

190. Gk. φιλαργυρία.

191. Gk. μισαδελφία.

192. Could also read: "let us give alms (ἐλεήσωμεν) to the needy".

HOMILY FOURTEEN

193. St. Gregory's statement here seems daring enough, but it springs from the fact that we have been called to become gods by grace (Exod. 7:1; 22:28, Ps. 82:6. Isa. 41:23, John 10:34), which means to receive and contain for ever the life of the Most Holy Trinity, to exist at the level of Him Who Is, on the plane of I AM

(see Hom. VIII, 8, n. 98, and Hom. XI, and nn. 149–151). As such, therefore, what is being freely offered to us by God Himself is not a return to the Paradisaical state, but something far greater: to "ever" or "eternal well-being" (ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι, as it is described by St. Maximus the Confessor in his *Ambigua* XLII, PG 91:1325BC; *cf.* St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration on Holy Baptism* XL, 2) on the level of divine Being, and for this reason all the names that can be applied to God become, by grace, applicable also to man. The only distinction which remains for ever, and it is one which has been zealously guarded by the Church throughout the ages, is that man's nature is and will always be created, whereas the essence and nature of God is uncreated, see *e.g.* nn. 37–38 (Hom. IV, 3), 103 (Hom. VIII, 13), 150–151 (Hom. XI, 12), above, and nn. 515 and 523 (Hom. XXXIV, 3 and 10), 551 (Hom. XXXV, 16), and 879 (Hom. LIII, 52) below. This of course preserves the distinction between the bestower of life (God) and those reasonable and noetic creatures upon whom life is bestowed (the angelic powers and human beings), who in turn rightfully acknowledge this gift of life by referring all glory, honour and worship back to God, the source of every good thing, in thanksgiving, which is *eucharist* (εὐχαριστία). The life which God wills to bestow upon His creature, however, the life with which we shall be filled, is divine and therefore uncreated and without beginning.

194. Gk. οὐκ ἐκτὸς παντάπασιν ἁμαρτίας ἐστί. That is to say, our "flesh's impulse to reproduce" is the result of the evil inclination of our fallen nature, which is why it "is not altogether without sin". It should be noted that certain Fathers regard sexual relations (even in the context of marriage) as a consequence of the fall (see *e.g.* St. Athanasius the Great, *Interpretation On the Psalms* L, 7; and St. John Chrysostom, *On Genesis*, Hom. XV, 4.) In fact it was Adam's fall, which resulted in man's becoming subject to death, that made marriage necessary. For this reason, marriage is recognized as conformity to the post-lapsarian state brought about by death (see St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* IV, 24); and St. John Chrysostom claims that if man had not transgressed, God would have multiplied the human race in a different way; the same view being held by St. Maximus the Confessor, in his *Ambigua* XLI (PG 91:1309A), who points to the creation of the angelic powers, the virgin birth and also to the future state of the human person (Gal. 3:28) as proof, see G. Mantzarides, *Christian Ethics* (Thessalonica, 1983), pp. 246–247 [in Greek]. As a result of Adam's fall, then, human beings ceased to move naturally and properly towards the good, in other words, towards perfection and stability in God, and began to incline or tend away from God and move towards evil: a movement and thus a change which is contrary to our very nature, and which necessarily leads to the instability and disintegration of the human person. It was by His incarnation without seed, therefore, that Christ, the New Adam, healed human nature of this evil impulse, and made it possible once more for man to be united with and abide permanently in God. See also Homs. XVI, 6,

XXX, 7, and esp. Homs. XLIII, 7, n. 656, LII, 7, n. 793, and LVII, 9, n. 1079, and LIX, 14, n. 1120.

195. The name "Maria" (Heb. מִרְיָם, *Miryâm,* Gk. Μαριάμ, Μαρία) has been variously explained. For instance, in a spurious work attributed to St. Gregory Thaumaturgus ("the Wonderworker", *c.* 213 – *c.* 270), "Maria" is interpreted as "illumination" or "enlightenment" (φωτισμός), "for what is brighter than the light of virginity", *Encomium for the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary,* Hom. II (PG 10:1164D); while in another spurious work, this time attributed to St. Epiphanius of Salamis in Cyprus (*c.* 315 – 403), the author gives the following series of interpretations: "Maria is interpreted as 'lady', but also as 'hope'. For she gave birth to the Lord, Christ, who is the hope of the whole world. And again Maria is interpreted as 'myrrh' of the sea; and myrrh speaks, as I believe, of immortality, for she was to give birth to the immortal pearl in the sea, that is to say, in the world . . . and again . . . it is interpreted as 'illuminating', since she was enlightened by the Son of God, and in turn enlightened the faithful . . . into [the mystery of] the Trinity", *Encomium for the Holy Theotokos,* Hom. V (PG 43:488Dff). St. John Damascene, in his *On the Orthodox Faith* IV, 14, gives the same interpretation as St. Gregory: "for this [*sc.* lady (κυρία)] is what the name Maria means" (Lampe, *s.v.* Μαρία).

196. Gk. κεχαριτωμένη, lit. *she who has been filled with grace,* in other words, *she who is* already *full of grace,* already perfect. See also *e.g.* Hom. LIII, 61, n. 941, and Hom. LVII, 3, n. 1015 below.

197. The Most Holy Mother of God, who was already full of grace at the time of her conception of Christ, meaning that she had already attained to perfection (see preceding note), had therefore also acquired the stability of incorruption, and thus bore Christ "without suffering corruption" (ἀδιαφθόρως τεκοῦσα, from the *Megalynarion,* "More honourable than the cherubim . . ." for the Theotokos), *without suffering change of any kind;* hence her "painless pregnancy", "the birth without labour", and the Orthodox confession of her as "ever-virgin". See also Hom. LIII, 38 and 47.

198. Notice that the "Ancient of days" (ὁ παλαιὸς τῶν ἡμερῶν) is the Son and Word of God in His divine aspect, according to His divine nature, while the designation "Son of man" refers to the same Son and Word of God in His human aspect, according to His human nature.

HOMILY FIFTEEN

199. The liturgical theme for Lazarus Saturday, celebrated on the day before Palm Sunday.

200. St. Gregory is pointing to the fact that the passions are insatiable.

201. The mystery of the consubstantiality of the Son and Word of God with God the Father, the *homoousion* – the affirmation that Father and Son are of one and the same nature – also means that they share a single and common will (see nn. 41, 103, 128, 201, 689, esp. 168). The manifestation of the single will of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is, moreover, revealed in their single and common energy or action in the world, in their oneness of operation *ad extra* (see nn. 41, 150, 168, and *cf.* 100).

202. It is important to point out that the New Israel, which is the Church, is the true inheritor of all God's promises. Just as Abraham himself received the covenant because of his faith, so too the Church, by faith, has received the fulfilment of God's covenant, which is none other than Christ Himself. In other words, without Christ, there is no covenant, since He is the content, purpose and fulfilment of the covenant which God made with Abraham and his seed. Therefore, all those who truly believe in Christ are, by grace, heirs of the covenant, and so also of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. See also Hom. LV, 2–4.

HOMILY SIXTEEN

203. *Cf.* n. 194 above.

204. Even though birth is often put forward as the triumph of the human race over death, it also signals man's subjection to death in the person of each individual. As St. Gregory of Nyssa says, "Corruption has its beginning from birth" (*On Virginity* XIV, 1); from Mantzarides, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

205. Gk. σαρκὸς . . . ὄρεξις.

206. Gk. ἐπιθυμία.

207. Gk. ἡδονὴ . . . σαρκός.

208. As St. John Damascene points out (in his *On the Orthodox Faith* III, 28), there are in fact two kinds of corruption (φθορά). The first pertains to the natural and innocent passions (πάθη διαβλητά, see n. 96), otherwise referred to as the "human passions" or "sufferings" (ἀνθρώπινα πάθη), which Christ, *voluntarily* – inasmuch as they had not been preceded by a sinful act of will, as was the case with the Old Adam (see n. 209) – fully assumed and endured. The second kind, however, concerns that corruption which involves the dissolution (διάλυσις), decay and destruction (διαφθορά) or utter disappearance (ἀφανισμός) of the human body (σῶμα), which is manifested *inter alia* in our "growing old" (παλαίωσις), in the process of aging. Christ, however, never experienced the latter, and indeed rejected it in His very person *supernaturally* (ὑπὲρ φύσιν), since, not only was He, as the New Adam, perfectly sinless in His humanity, "born of the Holy Ghost [*i.e.* divinely, without seed] and the Virgin Mary" (see n. 41), having assumed human nature like ours in every respect, apart from sin (*cf.* Heb. 4:15); but secondly and

most importantly, His human nature was deified (that is, realized the divine purpose for man) from the very moment in which it was united to His divine person, that is to say, from the very moment of conception in the Holy Virgin's womb (see nn. 41, 97, 98, and *cf.* 197), and thus enjoys all the properties and characteristics of His divine nature (see "hypostatic union" and *communicatio idiomatum,* n. 41 above and n. 689 below). Therefore, the body of the author and source of life was both sinless and life-giving, and as such not capable of experiencing the corruption of decay and destruction. And this is the corruption of which the psalmist speaks, when he says, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption (διαφθορὰ)" (Ps. 16:10, *cf.* Acts 2:31; 13:35).

209. Gk. παρὰ φύσιν. As St. Gregory points out (*cf.* n. 208), not growing old was also characteristic of the Old Adam's natural state (κατὰ φύσιν) in paradise, and it was only when he "turned aside after the pleasures of the flesh" and "underwent the defilement of sin" that he "grew old and fell into what is contrary to nature" (παρὰ φύσιν).

210. See Hom. XIV, 5; *cf.* nn. 194 and 208.

211. *Cf.* nn. 41, 97 and 98.

212. The soul (ἡ ψυχή) is not immortal by nature, and thus its immortality, which is given by the grace and will of God, is a pure gift; *cf.* St. Athanasius the Great, who explains that man shares in the "natural" instability of the cosmos (κόσμος) as a "composite" being (σύνθετος) and as originated "out of non-being" (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος), and that he is, "by his very nature", both "mortal" and "corruptible" (κατὰ φύσιν θνητός and φθαρτός), and thus by himself unable "to continue for ever" (οὐχ ἱκανὸν εἴη κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἰδίας γενέσεως λόγον διαμένειν ἀεί); therefore, it is only by the grace and participation of the Word that man is able to rise above the limitations of his created nature, *Against the Gentiles* 41; *On the Incarnation of the Word* 3–5; and see n. 27.

213. Because the soul (ψυχή) is "simple" (ἁπλῆ) in nature, it does not disintegrate, dissolve or decompose after death, that is to say, after its separation from the body; the human body, on the other hand, as composite (σύνθετος), dissolves back into its constituent elements, see St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 12; and *cf.* n. 212.

214. Disobedience (παρακοή) is the abuse of free will (αὐτεξούσιον, Hom. IV, 8, n. 39). See *e.g.* St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies* IV, 40, 1–3; V, 24, 3–4: "Henceforward this angel [*sc.* Lucifer] was an apostate and an enemy, and since that time has been jealous of God's work [*sc.* man], and has attempted to make him an enemy of God. That is why God, on the one hand, banished from his presence him who sowed the tares, that is, the one who brought about the transgression; whereas, on the other, he had mercy on man, who

carelessly but not wickedly became involved in disobedience . . ." (ἀμελῶς μὲν ἀλλ᾽ ἀκάκως παραδεξάμενον τὴν παρακοήν . . .); Origen, *On First Principles* I, Pref. 2; St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*c.* 315 – 387), *Catecheses* II, 4: "By his own choice (προαίρεσις) did he [*sc.* Lucifer] become the devil"; St. Basil the Great, Homily IX, 8 in *That God is not the Cause of Evil:* "he [*sc.* the devil] was cast down by the exercise of his own free will" (κατέρριψε τῆς γνώμης τὸ αὐτεξούσιον); St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration* VI (PG 45:28D–29B), and St. John Damascene, who says "by his own free choice (αὐτεξουσίῳ προαιρέσει) he [*sc.* the devil] changed from what was in harmony with his nature (κατὰ φύσιν) to what was contrary to it (παρὰ φύσιν)", in *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 4. See § 25 below; and *cf.* n. 39 (Hom. IV, 8).

215. "Liability to death", Gk. εὐθύνη, lit. *punishment,* and later, *responsibility.*

216. Gk. ἁρμόζων δι᾽ ἑκατέρου πρὸς μέρος ἑκάτερον.

217. Gk. τὴν δοκοῦσαν ἀθανασίαν. Angels are "apparently immortal", because, like men, they are not such by nature, but only by the grace of God.

218. Though an apparent allusion to the Greek philosophers in general, the phrase "the foolish sages of old" is probably a more specific reference to Aristotle and his school, inasmuch as, for the latter, not only is "actuality" or "energy" (ἐνέργεια) understood as the very essence of the Unmoved Mover (see *e.g.* Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII, 6, 1071^{b} 20–21), but it is also perceived as that which "soul" or "life-force" provides in all creatures (see *e.g.* Aristotle, *On the Soul* II, 1, 412^{a} 9–22). Furthermore, it may well be the case that St. Gregory has the *actus purus* of Thomist theology in mind here, which, although developed in a different manner to that of Aristotle (by Aquinas in his *Quinque Viae* and other works), is nevertheless based on the Aristotelian distinction between "potentiality" (δύναμις) and "actuality" (ἐνέργεια; *ODCC s.v.* "Actus Purus").

On the other hand, "those who think like Barlaam and Akindynus" probably refers to the followers of St. Gregory's third theological opponent, Nicephorus Gregoras. Common to all three of St. Gregory's adversaries is, firstly, a narrow and relentlessly rationalistic insistence on the divine simplicity, which, when pressed too far, does not sit well even with the fundamental doctrine of God as one (in essence) and three (in hypostases); and secondly, a denial of the essence–energies distinction in God, which would reduce God's visitations to merely created effects and created symbols. It is also worth noting here that the divine energies, according to St. Gregory, are the operations of all three divine hypostases acting in unison, by virtue of their oneness of essence or nature (see also nn. 100, 101, 103, 149, 150, and *cf.* 168).

219. Notice, firstly, that Christ, as noted above (see n. 208), *voluntarily* assumed a "mortal and passible body" (σῶμα . . . θνητὸν καὶ παθητόν) for our sake, that is to say, He was not compelled or obliged to do so (see *e.g.* § 30–31 below). And

secondly, that it was the devil's own pride, not the will of God, which prevented him from recognizing the extreme humility contained in the reality of the incarnation, and which caused him to be deceived and to attack Christ. God, of course, is neither the author of deception nor the instigator of evil deeds.

220. See St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* III, 18 and 20; see also n. 208 above.

221. Gk. τὴν μὲν θεανδρικὴν . . . ψυχὴν, *the soul of the God-man*, see n. 41 and esp. Hom. V, 2, n. 48, and *cf.* nn. 947 and 1047.

222. Christ's body was indeed "passible" and "mortal", but only as and when He, the Son and Word of God, allowed it to be so (see nn. 208, 219 and 220).

223. Gk. ἐξανάστασις.

224. Following the regeneration of our nature through baptism and the seal of the Holy Spirit by holy chrism in chrismation, our mortal and passible bodies are such only by divine economy, see St. Maximus the Confessor, *Letters to Thalassius* LXI (PG 90:625–645), inasmuch as the saints *voluntarily* lay down their lives (as did Christ), even though they are blameless and innocent. Their innocence means that sin, and therefore death too, has no hold over them. Thus, their innocent and unjust death is like that of Christ, and signifies their triumph (through Christ) over the devil and death (see n. 166).

225. The "new age" begins with Christ's coming in the flesh and His saving work; the gift of immortality and incorruptibility, which Christ brought to the world, *begins* in this life (see § 40 below).

226. Gk. πολλαπλῆ, in this case, *many-sided, multifaceted,* that which *has many sides* or *aspects to it.*

227. See n. 183 above.

228. See n. 215 above.

229. Gk. θεία λαμπρότης, *divine radiance* or *brilliance*; another name for the uncreated light of God's glory, which is His kingdom and life.

230. Gk. θεία ἔλλαμψις.

231. Gk. λαμπρότης.

HOMILY SEVENTEEN

232. Also referred to as Anti-Pascha and St. Thomas Sunday, that is, the first Sunday after Holy Pascha, Easter Sunday, the Feast of Feasts.

233. "The Holy Spirit's teaching is a word of light" that illumines everything with which it comes into contact (*cf.* "The light of Christ illumineth all", *Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts*), and thus understanding a part of it immediately brings one

into contact with the whole mystery of God's saving work. St. Gregory's words are, moreover, a wonderfully concise justification for not reducing the apostolic *kerygma* to the "lowest common denominator". The pastor's task is to raise the level of his flock's understanding of the life in Christ, and to instruct them in the life of the Spirit; and, if their spiritual disposition is correct (*cf.* nn. 32 and 60), the faithful will in turn be enlightened and "grasp the full meaning from the little" that they do "understand" (see n. 158). See Hom. LIII, 54, n. 882, and *cf.* Hom. XLVII, 4.

234. Here again we see how St. Gregory clearly regards man as the greatest of God's creatures, including those of the angelic world, see n. 21 (Hom. III, 5).

235. Gk. ἡμέρα μία opp. ἡμέρα πρώτη, lit. "day one" opp. "the first day" (see also n. 257); and Gk. ἀθρόον, *all at once, suddenly, immediately.* Like St. Gregory of Nyssa, Palamas believes that the foundations of all things were brought into being "all at once" (ἀθρόον) or "in a moment" (ἐν ἀκαρεῖ), that is, "by the first impulse of the will of God" (ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ τοῦ θελήματος ὁρμῇ); and it is from these foundations that all things were subsequently formed, see St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Apologia for the Hexaëmeron* 14–15, 24; and *cf.* St. Maximus the Confessor, who further develops this idea in terms of the divine λόγοι, in *e.g.* his *Ambigua* VII, and his *Letters to Thalassius* II (PG 90:269–272).

236. See Philo the Alexandrian (*c.* 20 BC – *c.* AD 50), in his *On the Making of the World* 13–14, 89–100; and *cf.* Josephus Flavius, the Jewish historian (*c.* 37 – *c.* 100), in his *Jewish Wars* I, 60, and his *Antiquities of the Jews* I, 33, who follows Philo in most matters. "Their followers" probably refers to such writers as Clement of Alexandria and Origen, both of whom adopted a similar line of interpretation with regard to the significance of the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest, *cf. Stromateis* VI, 16; and *Commentary on Matthew* 36–37, respectively. *Cf.* also, for example, St. Anastasius I of Antioch (*c.* 520 – 599), in his *Sermon I on the Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ* 3; and n. 274 below.

237. A "prime number" is a number which is not the product of any factors greater than unity, *i.e.*, a number which cannot be arrived at by multiplying any number other than one.

238. Gk. ἀσυνδιάστως, ἀρρεύστως καὶ ἀπαθῶς.

239. St. Gregory's focus here is on the mystery of the Holy Trinity, but his point may also be applied to the Theotokos, who begot the hypostasis of God the Word in the flesh; and indeed to the saints, who, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, "beget" Christ within themselves.

240. See St. Basil the Great, in Hom. III of his *Hexaëmeron,* and St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 6; and also nn. 22, 23 and 63 above.

241. Lit. "and so too is the entire heaven one" (καὶ εἷς ὁ πᾶς οὐρανός).

242. Gk. οὐρανός, *sky, heaven.* When referring to creation, the Fathers speak of the first heaven as that which lies above the firmament (Gen. 1:1; see *e.g.* St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Apologia for the Hexaëmeron* 5, and *cf. On the Making of Man* I, 2); when speaking of two heavens, they include the firmament as well (Gen. 1:8; and St. Basil the Great, in Hom. I of his *Hexaëmeron*, who describes the firmament as being "of a subtle nature, like smoke"), and it is not unusual for Scripture to refer to the air also as heaven (S. of III Ch. 57), in which case we could speak of three heavens (*cf.* 2 Cor. 12:2). What is more, even the seven zones or orbits of the stars and planets are sometimes referred to as heavens, see n. 240. St. Gregory takes the view that just as the visible, sensible world is one, so too is the visible, sensible heaven one, or, at most, two, which would again correspond to the first heaven and then to the firmament together with the air as the second (see esp. St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 5–6).

243. See n. 236 above.

244. The truths which we are able to arrive at by means of numbers, however compelling, are created truths and therefore not absolute. That is to say, the knowledge of God (who alone is uncreated), which is imparted to the saints in the experience of deification (θέωσις), is radically different and superior to all created truths, which are abolished in the experience of each person who reaches deification in this life, and will be utterly abolished at the end of time, when God Himself will be "all in all" (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:28).

245. *Cf.* St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names* IV, 13.

246. Gk. κατάπαυσις.

247. Gk. ἡ κατὰ νοῦν ἡμῶν θεωρία, *our contemplation according to the mind,* which is synonymous with *spiritual contemplation* (πνευματικὴ θεωρία), see nn. 106, 136, 148, 161, 521, 876–877, and *cf.* 183, 253, and 746; and St. Maximus the Confessor, in his *Ambigua* X, PG 91:1125D–1128A, for whom spiritual contemplation constitutes the first phase of the third and highest stage, that of theology (θεολογία), through which the Christian passes to the superior degree of mystical union with the Logos, see n. 183, and ἡ διὰ ταύτης πρὸς Θεὸν ἀνάνευσις, *ascent to God by that means,* signifies union and perfection (see also nn. 103; *cf.* 137, 194, and 197).

248. Gk. ἡ πρόγνωσις τῶν ἐσομένων.

249. Gk. ἀλήθεια, *verity* or *truth.*

250. Gk. κρίσις.

251. Gk. πρόνοια.

252. Gk. ἡ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐπιστροφή.

253. Gk. ἐκινείτω γὰρ ἀνάρχως τῇ ἑαυτοῦ θεωρίᾳ. See n. 247 above.

254. The theme of the contemplation of the image of God reflected in the mirror of the soul (*cf.* 2 Cor. 3:18) is one which had been developed especially by St. Gregory of Nyssa, see *e.g.* *On Virginity* XI, 5, *Homilies on the Song of Songs* IV and XV, *On the Making of Man* XII, 9; and see also St. Maximus the Confessor, who says that the gnostic men experience the transfiguration of the Word *within* themselves: "and with the transfiguration of the Word within them (ἐν αὐτοῖς), they will see with an unveiled face the glory of the Lord mirrored within themselves" (ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν Κυρίου κατοπτριζομένους), *Theological and Economical Chapters* I, 97, and *cf.* II, 14; and *cf.* also St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Oration on the Meeting of the Lord* (PG 46:1156D).

255. Gk. κυριακή.

256. The phrase "periods of seven weeks" refers to the feast of Weeks, "held on the 50th day (hence the Greek title 'Pentecost') after the offering of the barley-sheaf at the feast of Unleavened Bread" (see Lev. 23:9–21, Deut. 16:9–12); the feast of Trumpets is "kept on the first day of the seventh month (*i.e.* Tishri = October), the observance of which is ordained in Lev. 23:24 and Num. 29:1", *ODCC s.vv.* "Weeks, Feast of" and "Trumpets, Feast of", respectively. It is in fact the feast of Tabernacles that refers to "the eighth day" (ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ ὀγδόη) as the ἐξόδιον – lit. *the time of going out* or *departure*, and thus *a commemoration of Exodus* (see also the superscription for Ps. 28) – and also as "holy" (ἁγία).

257. In fact, the literal translation of both Heb. יום אחד, *yôm èhidh*, and Gk. (Lxx) ἡμέρα μία is *day one*, see Hom. II, 43–44, in the *Hexaëmeron* of St. Basil the Great.

258. Gk. καὶ συμψήφους αὐτοὺς τῆς ἐν οὐρανῷ δεσποτείας ἀπεργασάμενος, lit. *and having made them of the same opinion with His mastery* or *power in heaven*.

259. Gk. ἰατρεῖον.

260. Gk. ἱερὰ ἰατρεία.

261. Gk. ἀπαθές.

262. Gk. καὶ οἷς ἂν θέλῃ, lit. *to whomsoever* or *to as many as it wills*. See also n. 263.

263. The question of the marks or "symbols" of Christ's passion on His post-resurrection body is an interesting one as there are two apparently differing points of view among the Fathers on the matter. Firstly, there is widespread agreement that Christ retained the marks on His hands, feet and side up to and including His ascension, see *e.g.* St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration on Holy Pascha* XLV, 25; St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies On John* LXXXVII, 1–2; St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentaries On John* 20:19 and 20, and the Second Canon for the feast of the Ascension, by St. Joseph of Thessalonica, 762 – 832, also known as Joseph the Studite, the younger brother of St. Theodore the Studite, 759 – 826.

The point on which there seems to be a difference of opinion, however, pertains to the post-ascension glorified body of Christ and, by extension, to the final bodily state of the righteous in the kingdom of heaven. Probably the most explicit statement on the subject is to be found in St. Cyril of Alexandria, who forms the basis of Orthodox Christology, and who maintains that Christ deigned to appear before His disciples still bearing the signs of corruptibility on His hands and side, in order to make it plain, even to the angelic powers (*cf.* Isa. 63:1), that He had risen with the very same body which was crucified and which He had received from the Holy Virgin. But, Christ retained the wounds on His resurrected body up to and including (but *not* after) the moment of His ascension to the Father, because marks such as these, properly speaking, should no longer have been present on His resurrected and so incorruptible body (see n. 208 above), since, "at the time of the resurrection there will be no remnant of adventitious corruption left in us" (ὅτι κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἀναστάσεως καιρὸν οὐδὲν ἐν ἡμῖν περιλειφθήσεται φθορᾶς τῆς ἐπεισάκτου λείψανον), trans. *A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church,* vol. II: St. John IX–XXI (London, 1885), p. 686; see *Commentaries On John* 20:19 and 20, and esp. 20:26 and 27; and 1 Cor. 15:42–43: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It [*sc.* the body] is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power".

Further, St. Cyril's position appears to be supported by what St. Gregory of Nyssa says in the concluding paragraph of his *Homily On Holy Pascha,* namely, that "it is illogical and a sign of great ignorance if we accept, on the one side, that the characteristics of bodies, which have already decomposed and become corrupt, can appear now on bodies which are born daily, and even that extraneous characteristics appear on other bodies, and then not to acknowledge in like manner that the characteristics which are theirs by nature, and which they once possessed as their own, are renewed and brought back to life" (τὰ δὲ ἴδια καὶ ἐξαίρετα περὶ αὐτῶν τῶν ποτε κεκτημένων ἀνανεοῦσθαι καὶ ἀναβιώσκεσθαι μὴ συνομολογεῖν; found in Metropolitan Hierotheos' *Life after Death,* Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1999, pp. 244–245 [in Greek]; Eng. trans. Esther Williams, 1996, p. 227). Thus, in the life to come, the bodies of the saints will be "renewed and brought back to life" in incorruption (ἀφθαρσία), that is, without any sign of corruption (φθορά).

However, St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, in his interpretation of the third *troparion* in the abovementioned Canon (which reads: "Why are His garments red who is united to the grossness of the flesh? The holy angels, on seeing Christ, extolled Him who bare the divine symbols of the venerable Passion" [*cf.* Isa. 63:1]; trans. *The Pentecostarion,* Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Boston, Mass., 1990), p. 334), makes use of St. Gregory's analogy of the windows of a house and the wounds of those who have suffered for Christ's sake as their "adornment", "beauty" and "glory", and holds that Christ will come again bearing these same wounds (appealing now to St. Nicholas Cabasilas, b. *c.* 1322 – *c.* 1395, *cf.* his *The Life in Christ* VI, 9–10, who says that Christ "determined to preserve in His body the signs of His death and *always* to have with Him the marks of the wounds which were once inflicted on Him when He was crucified", and that He is "seated on His royal throne with the scars which He has acquired from human weakness", trans. C. J. deCatanzaro, SVS Press, 1974, p. 164), so that He might show them to the Jews (*cf.* Rev. 1:7, Zech. 12:10, and John 19:37; and Isa. 63:1), see St. Nicodemus' *Heortodromion: Interpretation of the Asmatic Canons for the Feasts of Our Lord and His Most Holy Mother,* Venice, 1836 repr. ed., pp. 507–510, and esp. pp. 508–509, n. 1 [in Greek].

The common thread running throughout these points of view, however, is that the marks on Christ's hands, feet and side signify the reality of His incarnation, and, inextricably bound up with this, the everlasting glory of His passion. In this fascinating passage (§§ 18–19), in which St. Gregory states that "those who have suffered for Christ are adorned *for ever* with their wounds", and in which he likens their wounds to the windows of a house which "let in light and allow those within to look out", Palamas also adds that "the body's sufferings for Christ's sake and the resultant wounds become for those who bear them windows *to let in* the light without evening". Hence, according to St. Gregory, what will be seen in Christ's heavenly kingdom is the glory (that is to say, the recognizably greater glory) of the martyrs emanating from their bodies, bodies which have been sanctified and glorified by those wounds which they suffered for Christ's sake (*cf. e.g. The Martyrdom of Polycarp* XVII and XIX, which identifies incorruption as the "crown of martyrdom"; St. Justin the Philosopher and Martyr (*c.* 100 – *c.* 165), in his *First Apology* X, where incorruption is described as a reward for martyrdom and suffering; St. Hippolytus of Rome, *Fragments On the Resurrection and On Incorruption* (PG 10:861C), who defines incorruption (in reference to Christ's humanity) as a state in which there can be neither suffering nor the piercing of nails and spear, neither sweating nor the shedding of blood; Lampe, *s.vv.* ἀφθαρσία and ἄφθαρτος). This means, as St. Gregory goes on to say, that "their scars will not be obliterated when suffering comes to an end, *in so far as* they procure immortality", in other words, their scars will be discernible in the age to come in the sense that the greater glory of martyrdom for Christ will be made manifest, recognized and praised by all.

264. Gk. νοερῶς, also *intellectually, noetically.*

265. The book referred to as "Ecclesiasticus" (Ecclus.) was more commonly known as the "Wisdom (or 'Proverbs') of Jesus the son of Sirach", see *ODCC s.v.* "Ecclesiasticus".

266. Gk. τὴν εἰρήνην ἔνδον τῷ λογιζομένῳ τῆς ψυχῆς παρέξει; see also διάνοια, nn. 25 and 175, and λογιστικόν, esp. n. 117.

HOMILY EIGHTEEN

267. The Second Sunday after Holy Pascha, for which the Gospel reading is Mark 15:43–16:8 (*cf.* Matt. 28:18, Luke 23:56; 24:1–12, and John 20:1–13).

268. St. Gregory's thesis turns largely on the identification of the Mother of God with Mary the mother of James and Joses. Others, however, would identify Mary the mother of James and Joses with Mary the wife of Cleophas (see John 19:25). See also Hom. XX, 2.

HOMILY NINETEEN

269. The Fourth Sunday after Holy Pascha, for which the Gospel reading is John 4:5–42.

270. The period from Holy Pascha (Easter day) to the day of Pentecost, lit. *the fiftieth day,* see Hom. XXIV.

271. Which takes place on the fortieth day from Holy Pascha, see Homs. XXI and XXII.

272. In His divine person, the Son and Word of God, being consubstantial with God the Father (ὁμοούσιος τῷ Πατρί, see n. 201), always shared the same throne as the Father (ὁμόθρονος), and was equally divine (ὁμόθεος) with Him. The divine purpose for the human race, however, is seen in the union of our human nature to the divine person of Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity (see n. 41), and in its being raised to the right hand of the Father. "Christ manifested the perfection of the divine image in man and the possibility for our nature of assimilating the fullness of divinization to the very extent that, after His ascension, He placed our nature 'on the right hand of the Father'", Archimandrite Sophrony, in *We Shall See Him As He Is,* trans. Rosemary Edmonds (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1988), p. 193. "On the right hand of the Father" (ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ Πατρός) denotes nothing less than equality with God the Father.

273. Here, St. Gregory gives us a succinct definition of the Orthodox understanding of *apokatastasis,* that is, the restoration of all things in Christ.

274. Gk. ἑβδομάς, the number *seven,* also *seventh day,* signifying *sabbath* and *rest,* see *Clementine Homilies* XVII, 10, Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* VI, 14; *week* of creation, as in St. Basil the Great, in Hom. II, 8 of his *Hexaëmeron,* but in this case refers to the seven weeks of Great Lent, see also St. Basil, Homily XIV, 1: *Against those given to Drunkenness* (Lampe, *s.v.*), *cf.* also Hom. XVII, 3, and n. 236; and Gk. τετρακτύς, originally the Pythagorean name for *the sum of the first four numbers, i.e.* 10 (1 + 2 + 3 + 4), Liddell and Scott, *s.v.*; also, *a group of four, quarternity,* ref. to the four Gospels, as in Eusebius of

Caesarea (*c.* 260 – *c.* 340), *History of the Church* III, 25, 1 (see Lampe, *s.v.*). But, for St. Gregory the number four is honourable simply because it refers to this present age, that is to say, to the life of this world, which "is made up of four seasons, four parts and four elements".

275. Jacob's well is referred to as "a spring" (πηγή), because it represents the baptismal font, see § 16 below.

276. As with Isaac, Esau and Jacob, where, although Jacob was born after Esau, he received Isaac's blessing and thus became the firstborn "by grace" (Gen. 25:28–34; 27:1–35), so too with Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 41:51–52; 46:20), for Ephraim became Joseph's "firstborn" upon receiving a blessing from Jacob's "right hand" (Gen. 48:1–20).

277. Following king Solomon's death (*c.* 930 BC), the Kingdom of Israel was divided into two (1 Kgs. 12:20–24): the Northern Kingdom, inhabited by Ten Tribes (including the two half-Tribes of Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim), which continued to be referred to as Israel until the Assyrian conquest of *c.* 721 BC, and which was first ruled by king Jeroboam I ("Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel", 1 Kgs. 12:25; and for Jeroboam's apostasy, see 1 Kgs. 12:26–13:10); and the Southern Kingdom, inhabited by Two Tribes, those of Judah and Benjamin, subsequently referred to as the Kingdom of Judah (or in NT Judaea), and first ruled by king Rehoboam (NT "Roboam", Matt. 1:7), Solomon's son and heir (1 Kgs. 11:43).

278. Samaria is the name of the city founded by king Omri (or Ambri LXX) in 880 BC to be his capital (and completed under his son, Ahab); later, the Hill of Somor (or "Semeron" LXX, or "Shemer" AV), the acropolis of the city, was referred to as Samaria (*cf.* 1 Kgs. 16:23–24); and finally, the whole of the Northern Kingdom, which was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 – 721 BC, came to be known as Samaria (*cf.* Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 549, n. 8). Vast numbers of the Ten (northern) Tribes were deported to Babylon and Persia, and peoples of other nations began to settle in Samaria, with whom the remaining Israelites intermingled and by whom they were influenced, both in cultural and religious terms (*cf.* 2 Kgs. 17:24–41; 18:9–12), and so the purity of their ancestry was called into question.

279. Though the product of intermingling with various other nations after 721 BC, most of the Samaritans, by the time of Jesus, saw themselves as heirs of Jacob, and continued to worship the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, in Mount Gerizim (*cf.* Deut. 11:29). They accepted only the Pentateuch as Scripture (the Samaritan Targum). St. Gregory, however, points out that so far as the Jews were concerned, the Samaritans were regarded as Gentiles (see n. 278).

280. That God is *in* everything does not mean that God *is* everything: Palamas is certainly not advocating pantheism here. Rather, he is pointing to the fact that God, by His divine grace or energies (see nn. 100–101, 103, 149–150; *cf.* 117, 168, 201 and 218), is actively present in His creation, and in the very life of His creature. All created things participate in God's energies or operation in the world, for it is none other than God Himself who creates, sustains, provides for, and also (in the case of intellectual creatures: the angelic powers and men) sanctifies them, see *e.g.* St. Gregory's *Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetic Life: One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* 87–93, and *cf.* his work, *On Divine Unity and Distinction* 13–14, 16 and 30; and his *Refutation Against Akindynus* 2, 11, 43 and 5, 6, 27 and 117–118.

281. Gk. ἐνυπόστατος, *cf.* Hom. VIII, 8 (and n. 94).

282. Souls and angels are not restricted by time and space as are we in this present life, and so they can move with lightning speed from one end of the universe to the other, sometimes giving the impression that they are in all places at all times; though this, as St. Gregory points out, cannot be the case, since omnipresence (like omniscience) is a characteristic unique to God alone, who has set a limit to His creatures; and see St. John Damascene, in his *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 3, where he speaks of the angelic powers *vis-à-vis* God as "circumscribed" (περιγραπτοί εἰσιν).

283. See *e.g.* St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 12; and *cf.* nn. 39 and 213.

284. In the Samaritan woman's case, "prophetic books" means the Pentateuch, see n. 279.

285. See nn. 277–279 above.

286. See n. 275.

287. Gk. Φωτεινή (*Photeinē*), *shining, brilliant.*

288. This is the first time that Christ refers to Himself explicitly as the Messiah.

HOMILY TWENTY

289. John 20:11–18, The Appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, is read in Matins on the Fifth Sunday after Holy Pascha, the Sunday of the Blind Man, for which the Gospel reading is John 9:1–38.

290. St. Gregory is referring now to the Gospel for Matins of the previous Sunday, that is to say, to the Seventh Matinal Gospel (John 20:1–10), read on the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman.

291. Gk. τὸ μνῆμα τὸ ζωαρχικόν, also *life-giving.*

292. For the Mother of God as first to see Christ risen from the dead, see also Hom. XVIII, 6–8.

293. *Cf.* the first stage in Archimandrite Sophrony's threefold schema of the spiritual life, in *e.g. We Shall See Him As He Is, op. cit.*, pp. 85 and 218–219.

294. St. John Climacus, Step 26, "On Discernment", *The Ladder of Divine Ascent, op. cit.*, p. 175.

295. *Cf.* St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* X (PG 91:1132B–1133A).

296. As St. Maximus puts it, St. Mary Magdalene still viewed Christ in human terms, "as no more than may be perceived by the senses" (μηδὲν ὑπὲρ τὴν αἴσθησιν νομίζουσαν), *ibid.*

297. For a fuller explanation of St. Gregory's reasoning on this question, see Hom. XVIII, esp. §§ 2–13 above.

298. Note that the upward motion ascribed to the element of fire is based on an Aristotelian understanding of the universe, the model which people of Palamas' age worked with (see also nn. 22–23 and 63).

299. As in St. Gregory the Theologian before him (in his *Oration on Pentecost* XLI, 3), to whom St. Gregory Palamas appeals in this instance (see *Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetic Life: One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* 70; and in his *Refutation Against Akindynus* 5, 15, 58), the prophet Isaiah's words – "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and godliness shall fill him; the spirit of the fear of God" – are understood within the context of the essence–energies distinction (see nn. 41, 66, 100–101, 103, 117, 149–150, 168, 201, 218, and 280), and hence identifies the seven characteristics ascribed to the Spirit as uncreated divine energies of God's grace – that aspect of God's Being which is "undividedly divided" (see *e.g. One Hundred and Fifty Chapters, op. cit.*, 68; and also n. 101).

300. St. Gregory applies the title "apostle to the apostles" first to the Mother of God herself (see Hom. XVIII, 11 above); and intimations of it are also found in the hymnography for the Week of the Myrrhbearing Women.

301. Referring to the church in which St. Gregory is addressing the people, that is, Hagia Sophia of Thessalonica (built towards the end of the 8th cent.), and at that time the city's cathedral.

302. *Cf.* Origen's *Commentary on Matthew* 30, where he describes the words of the prophets as "angels", which will accompany Christ at His Second and glorious Parousia (*cf.* Matt. 16:27); because, as bearing witness to the truth of the divine Logos, they too contain within themselves a measure of the Father's glory.

303. Note that St. Gregory the Sinaïte identifies two kinds of warmth (θέρμη), see n. 139 above.

304. See n. 140.

305. Gk. τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν τῆς ψυχῆς, see nn. 32, 117 and 142.

Homily Twenty-One

306. Delivered towards the end of Matins, probably during the all-night vigil for the feast of the Ascension (see P. Chrestou, ed., *Gregory Palamas: The Complete Works,* vol. 10, in the series *Greek Fathers of the Church* 76, Thessalonica, 1985, pp. 7–8 [in Greek]).

307. Gk. τὸ φάσκα τὸ νομικὸν, *the Passover of the law, the Jewish* or *Mosaic Passover, Pasch* (Heb. פֶּסַח, *pésach*, Aram. פַּסְחָא, *pᵉschá*) and note that while φάσκα has the same etymology as πάσχα, the latter is most often used to refer to the Christian Passover, "the gospel Pascha".

308. Gk. ἐνυπόστατος, see also *e.g.* Hom. VIII, 8, n. 94.

309. Gk. συναναστραφεῖς, from the verb συναναστρέφω. *live with* or *among, associate, have dealings* or *go about with. Cf.* also the *Glory* or *Doxastikon* (known also as the *Theotokíon* in Greek and as the *Bogoródichen* in Slavonic) of the *Stichera* (that is, the stanzas after "Lord, I have cried . . .") for Sunday Vespers in the Fourth Plagial (Tone Eight): "The King of Heaven, out of love for mankind (φιλανθρωπία), appeared on earth and *went about* among men [*i.e. lived with* men]".

310. Notice here St. Gregory's use of the liturgical "today" (σήμερον), which signifies, not a re-enactment, nor even a re-living, of the mystery in question. but *a participation in* its eternal reality, an experience of each saving event in the divine economy, which was accomplished for our sake once and for all. and which is made present *by the grace of the Holy Spirit.* See also *e.g.* Hom. XXIV, 1, Hom. XLII, 3, Hom. LII, 14, and Hom. LVIII, 12.

311. The allusion here is not in keeping with what we know of Jeremiah either in canonical or non-canonical sources, and is most likely due to an error on the part of a copyist. Indeed, the context would suggest rather that it is the prophet Ezekiel that St. Gregory has in mind: "And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem" (Ezek. 8:3).

312. In the Christian tradition, Elijah's assumption, like that of Enoch (Gen. 5:22–24) and the others mentioned above, is recognized as prophetic in character, and thus distinguishable from that of Christ. Hence, Elijah's "ascension" was "*as though* into heaven" (ὡς εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, 2 Kgs. 2:11 LXX); see also Origen, *Fragment 75 on John,* and St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* XIV,

25, whereas Christ's ascension was truly "into heaven" (εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν), St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *ibid.*; and in a work attributed to St. Epiphanius of Salamis, it states that "neither Elijah nor anyone else has ascended into heaven, save only . . . the Son of God", *Homily IV on the Ascension of Christ*; and see also St. John Chrysostom, *On the Lord's Ascension V*; and St. Basil of Seleucia (d. after 468), in his *Homily IV on the Lord's Ascension* (found in Lampe, *s.v.* Ἡλίας). See also Hom. XXI, 31 below.

313. St. Gregory wishes to emphasize here the personal character of our salvation. Christ, the God-man, is not, and does not have, a human hypostasis or person: He is the divine hypostasis or person of the Son and Word of God, who voluntarily assumed human nature for our sake (nn. 41, 97–98). It was not a human person, then, which rose and ascended, but the human nature in the Son and Word of God, which He had deigned to receive from the Most Holy Theotokos. St. Gregory's point, therefore, is that the resurrection and ascension of Christ's human nature does not signify the resurrection and ascension of our fallen human nature in a merely abstract or general sense, but rather that by them Christ inaugurates the resurrection and ascension of each and every human hypostasis or person that voluntarily imitates Him in his or her way of life.

314. The disciples of Christ follow the Way of Christ, namely, that of His passion and crucifixion, but also of His resurrection and ascension, *cf.* St. Maximus the Confessor, *Letters to Thalassius* LXI; and St. Gregory's Homs. II, 20, and XVI, 32–34 (and see nn. 16, 166 and 224 above).

315. These three stages in the life of the Christian, broadly speaking, correspond to St. Gregory's threefold schemata (see esp. n. 183 above).

316. Once again (see nn. 16, 166 and 224 above; and Hom. XXXVII, 3, n. 570), St. Gregory emphasizes the fact that the death of the saints is in imitation of Christ's voluntary and innocent death.

317. Gk. ἀνίδρυσις.

318. See n. 263.

319. *Cf.* § 4 above, and nn. 313–314.

320. Gk. πλεονεξία, also *greed.*

HOMILY TWENTY-TWO

321. Delivered during the Liturgy on the day of the feast, see Chrestou (ed.), *Gregory Palamas: The Complete Works,* vol. 10, in the series *Greek Fathers of the Church* 76 (Thessalonica, 1985), pp. 7–8 [in Greek].

322. Notice the significance of the phrase "before all ages and unto all ages" (πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ εἰς αἰῶνας). In this context the term αἰών (Heb. עוֹלָם, *'ôlâm*), *aeon, age* or *world*, denotes the very first of God's creation (as in Heb. 1:2 and Ps. 90:2, and see St. John Damascene, *c.* 655 – *c.* 750, *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 1, who, basing himself on the *Hexaëmeron* of St. Basil the Great, *c.* 330 – 379, Hom. II, 43–44, also gives the different meanings ascribed to the term, adding the helpful phrase that αἰών is "coextensive with things eternal", συμπαρεκτεινόμενος τοῖς ἀϊδίοις), and hence only God, who alone is uncreated (ἄκτιστος), may be said to exist "before all ages" and "unto all ages" (πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ εἰς αἰῶνας), or, as in AV, "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. 90:2, Heb. מֵעוֹלָם עַד־עוֹלָם, *mē'ôlâm 'adh-'ôlâm*). And while it is true that created reasonable creatures (namely, the angelic powers and human beings) have been brought into being to exist for ever, their perpetuity or eternal existence (αἰωνιότης) has a beginning, is a pure gift from God "by grace" (κατὰ χάριν), and is thus wholly contingent upon Him; whereas God, by contrast, is "eternal" (αἰώνιος), and indeed "pre-eternal" or "sempiternal" (προαιώνιος, ἀΐδιος), "by nature" (κατὰ φύσιν); see also Hom. XVI, 7, n. 212.

323. Gk. οὐκ ἀρχόμενος, οὐ παυόμενος.

324. Gk. οὐ γινόμενος, οὐ φθειρόμενος, οὐκ αὐξόμενος, οὐ μειούμενος.

325. Gk. οὐδενὶ τρόπῳ ἢ τόπῳ μεταβαλλόμενος.

326. Gk. ἄναρχος, ἄκτιστος, ἄτρεπτος, ἀσύγχυτος, ἀπεριόριστος.

327. Gk. αὐτὸς πάντα τρέπων ἐπὶ τὸ κρεῖττον ὡς βούλεται, αὐτὸς παραχωρῶν ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον τρέπεσθαι τὰ τοῦτο πάσχοντα.

328. Gk. πᾶν δὲ τὸ ἔχον ἀρχήν, καὶ τροπὴν ὑφίσταται, τροπὴ γάρ τις ἡ ἀρχή ἐστι.

329. Gk. ὅση αἰσθητικὴ καὶ ὅση ἀναίσθητος. ὅση λογικὴ καὶ ὅση ἄλογος.

330. Gk. ἡ λογικὴ μόνη φύσις τὸ αὐτεξούσιον ἔχουσα, see n. 39 (Hom. IV, 8).

331. Our rational human nature possesses *free will* or, more precisely, the principle of *self-governance* (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον), see Hom. IV, 8, n. 39. In other words, free will is a "natural" property (belonging to the nature) of every rational or reasonable being, both angelic and human, created by God. As such, all reasonable creatures have been endowed with the natural capacity to will (τὸ θέλειν). However, how they choose to exercise this power (τὸ πῶς θέλειν), that is, whether they employ their *free will* in a good or evil manner, depends not upon nature but upon the person or hypostasis, since it is the person that determines whether or not it remains in harmony with the will of God [see Hom. XVI, 8, n. 214; *cf.* Hom. V, 3 and Hom. XXI, 4, n. 312; and *On the Holy Trinity* XX, a spurious but important work found among those of St. Cyril of Alexandria, d. 444 (PG 77:1160D); St. Maximus the Confessor,

circa 580 – 662, *Disputation with Pyrrhus* (PG 91:293A), and his *Theological and Polemical Opuscule III: To the Presbyter Marinus of Cyprus* = Chapter 51 of his *On Energies and Wills* (48A and 56B); and St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* III, 18]. Following and remaining steadfast in the will of God is thus the natural state in which all reasonable creatures were originally created, and signifies therefore the natural and proper use of *free will*. The fall of both Lucifer and Adam, by contrast, was caused by the unnatural and improper use of their *free will*, inasmuch as they chose to follow what was not in accordance with the will of God, see Hom. XVI, 8, n. 214.

In the Fathers, the act of choosing not to follow the will of God is often referred to as the *deliberative* or *gnomic will* (θέλημα γνωμικόν). Careful attention should be given, however, to the context in which this term is used, as it is also employed, together with *intention* or *inclination* (γνώμη), to signify the "object of willing", and in such cases is synonymous with *that which is willed* (τὸ θελητόν), see *e.g.* St. Cyril of Alexandria, *op. cit.*, XXI (1160ff); and St. John Damascene, *op. cit.*, II, 22. But in the sense which implies *deliberation* the *gnomic will* is opposed to the *natural will* (θέλημα φυσικόν); for the very act of *deliberation* is itself seen as a sign of doubt or indecision or wavering, and thus of ignorance or imperfection. Strictly speaking, therefore, Christ – the uncreated divine hypostasis of the Son and Word of God made flesh – who exists in two natures (divine and human), with two natural energies and wills (see Hom. XII, 8, n. 168; and *cf.* Hom. IV, 12, n. 41), had no *deliberative* or *gnomic will*, see *Fragment on Luke 22:44*, preserved in a work attributed to St. Dionysius of Alexandria, d. *c.* 264 (PG 10:1593C); St. Cyril, *op. cit.* (1161A); St. Maximus the Confessor, *Theological and Polemical Opuscule III*, *op. cit.* (48D); and St. John Damascene, *op. cit.*, II, 22, in the sense that, as the God-man, the θεάνθρωπος (see Homs. IV, 12, n. 41; VIII, 8, 13, nn. 97–98, 103; XVI, 5, n. 208, and Hom. LIII, 53, n. 881), there was never any question of His human will not willing what His divine will willed it to will (St. John Damascene, *op. cit.*, II, 22 and III, 18), or, put simply, there was never any question of Him not following the will of the Father (see *e.g.* Hom. XV, 5–6, n. 201), since Christ's human will was always in perfect harmony with His own divine will, the latter being the very same will of God the Father.

Moreover, Christ's "mode of willing" (τρόπος θελήσεως), as is the case in general with His "mode of existence" (τρόπος ὑπάρξεως), as co-unoriginate (συνάναρχος) and uncreated (ἄκτιστος), is also *immutable* or *unchangeable* (ἄτρεπτος); whereas the "mode of willing" of all reasonable beings, as originate, that is, as having a beginning (ἀρχή), and created (κτιστός), is *mutable* or *changeable* (τρεπτός) by volition (ἐθελότρεπτος), *cf.* St. John Damascene, *op. cit.*, II, 12; and see n. 8 above.

332. Gk. βούλησις

333. Gk. προκοπὴ καὶ τροπὴ καὶ πρόοδος.

334. See Hom. XVI, 8 and 25, n. 214.

335. *Cf.* St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *Celestial Hierarchy* III, 3; and St. John Damascene, who describes these angels as "secondary lights" (φῶτα δεύτερα), as distinct from the "first and unoriginate light" (πρῶτον καὶ ἄναρχον φῶς), *On the Orthodox Faith* III, 3.

336. See n. 14 above.

337. It is interesting that St. Gregory ascribes the unforgivable character of the fallen angels' sin to the rôle they played in the fall of man. *Cf.* John Damascene, who says that angels are "not susceptible of repentance" (ἀνεπίδεκτοι μετανοίας), because they are incorporeal (ἀσώματος); adding also that it is "due to the weakness of his body" (διὰ τὴν ἀσθένειαν τοῦ σώματος) that man has been given the ability to repent, *On the Orthodox Faith* III, 3.

338. See nn. 14 and 17 above.

339. Gk. διαβιοῦμεν, from διαβιόω, lit. *live through* (Liddell and Scott, *s.v.*), hence *experience.*

340. Gk. ἐπιστροφή.

341. Gk. ἀπόγνωσις.

342. *Cf.* Homs. V, 15, n. 53, LII, 10, n. 796, and LVII, 5–6, n. 1022.

343. See Hom. XXI, 2, n. 311.

344. Originally found in Plato (427 – 347 BC), *Republic* 533d, in the Christian tradition this language goes back at least as far as Clement of Alexandria, who speaks explicitly of purifying "the eye of the soul" (τὸ ὄμμα τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκκαθαίρειν), *Paedagogus* or *Tutor* II, 1, 2; and *cf.* III, 2. Earlier, St. Clement of Rome (*fl. c.* 96) had spoken of "looking with the eyes of our soul into His long-suffering will" (ἐμβλέψωμεν τοῖς ὄμμασιν τῆς ψυχῆς εἰς τὸ μακρόθυμον αὐτοῦ βούλημα), *First Epistle to the Corinthians* XIX, 3.

345. See Clement of Alexandria, who identifies the divine Logos as the "pre-eternal light" (φῶς ἀΐδιον), *Paedagogus* or *Tutor* III, 12; and see esp. his *Excerpts from the Writings of Theodotus* IV, 1–2, where the transfiguration is identified as the point at which the pre-eternal light, which was always with the Father and never ceased to shine in heaven, is beheld united with the created, human flesh of Christ.

346. See n. 344 above.

347. See Hom. IX, 4, n. 109.

Homily Twenty-Three

348. John 21:1–14: the Appearance of Jesus to the Seven Disciples.

349. Gk. ἐπενδύτης.

350. Gk. τὰ σὰ ἐκ τῶν σῶν, from the *Anaphora* of the Liturgies of SS. Basil the Great and John Chrysostom; and *cf.* 1 Chr. 29:14.

351. Gk. ἀνθρακιά, *fire of coals* or *charcoal fire*. See also Ecclus. 11:32, where the meaning of ἀνθρακιά is "a heap of coals"; and 4 Macc. 9:20 Lxx, where the rendering of ἀνθρακιά is "hot ashes"; see E. Hatch and H. A. Redpath (eds.), *A Concordance to the Septuagint and Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books)*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), *s.v.*

352. St. Gregory is here following the Patristic tradition of hermeneutics, which is based on the understanding that nothing in the word of God is without significance (*cf.* Matt. 5:18).

353. Gk. τῶν σωζομένων τὰ πλήθη.

354. *Cf.* Hom. XXII, 16 above.

355. Gk. τῆς διανοίας ὄμμασιν.

356. Gk. ὡς εἰς παρόντα τὸν Χριστὸν νοερῶς ἀτενίζοντες.

357. Gk. πόλεμος . . . ὁ διὰ τῶν λογισμῶν. And see Hom. II, 13, n. 10, which refers to the "prayer of a single thought", also known as the Jesus Prayer.

358. See n. 357 above. The struggle against tempting or intrusive thoughts (λογισμοί), which stands at the focal point of the spiritual life, is one of "mind wrestling against mind", the human mind resisting and (only with the help of God) prevailing over the mind of the enemy, see *The Philokalia* of SS. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and Macarius (Notaras) of Corinth, trans. Palmer, Sherrard and Ware, 4 of 5 projected vols. (1979–1995), *passim*; "On Cutting off Passionate Desires Before They Become Rooted Habits of Mind", *Spiritual Discourses* XI of St. Dorotheus of Gaza, trans. Wheeler, *op. cit.*, and Scouteris, *op. cit.*, and St. John Climacus, Step. 26, "On Discernment of Thoughts, Passions and Virtues", in *The Ladder of Divine Ascent, op. cit.*, pp. 161–197; and also *Saint Silouan the Athonite, op. cit.*, pp. 167–168, pp. 133–142 ("On the Development of Intrusive Thoughts"); and pp. 440–447 ("Concerning Intrusive Thoughts and Delusions").

359. Gk. τὸ πολίτευμα, rendered in the AV as *conversation*; both the English Revised Standard Version (1881) and the American Standard Edition of the Revised Standard Version (1901) translate *citizenship*.

360. Gk. τὸ ὄμμα τῆς διανοίας.

HOMILY TWENTY-FOUR

361. As the internal evidence suggests (see § 11 below), this homily was delivered relatively soon after St. Gregory was allowed to enter Thessalonica, and thus probably marks his first Pentecost in the second city of the Empire. If the earlier dating *vis-à-vis* St. Gregory's entry into Thessalonica were correct, that is to say, December of 1349, then Hom. XXIV would have been delivered at Pentecost of 1350. Alternatively, however, if the later dating of December 1350 were correct, it would have been delivered not at Pentecost of 1351, but in fact at Pentecost of 1352, since St. Gregory would have been, from the end of May to at least the middle of July, in Constantinople, taking part in the council of 1351 (see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, pp. 9–10; and also n. 1 above).

362. St. Gregory is referring here to the mystery of "liturgical time", the "eternal now", experienced by the faithful in the liturgical life of the Church, in which each saving event of Christ, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, is made present (see also, Hom. XXI, 2, Hom. XLII, 3, esp. n. 638, Hom. LII, 14, and Hom. LVIII, 12). The saving work of Christ has eternal significance, and so everything He said and did during His divine economy in the flesh remains unto the ages. Mystically therefore, that is to say, by the Holy Spirit acting in and through the mysteries or sacraments of the Church, the faithful are transported to the plane of divine and eternal "well-being", to the plane of the life of the All Holy Trinity, where there is only the "now", only "I AM", and set before the very same events which the patriarchs, prophets and apostles experienced; the only right and fitting response for which is to worship, glorify and praise God unto the ages of ages. It is in this sense, then, that St. Gregory can say to his congregation (and through them also to us) that they beheld Christ ascending "no less clearly than those accounted worthy to be eye witnesses, nor are we less favoured than they".

363. Notice again that "by faith" the believer experiences those same wonders, which the historical eye-witnesses of Christ's saving works experienced (see n. 362 above; Hom. XXI, 2; Hom. XLII, 3, esp. n. 638, Hom. LII, 14, and Hom. LVIII, 12).

364. As consubstantial with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit also shares one and the same divine will and one and the same divine energy or operation, together with the Father and the Son, by virtue of which all three divine persons always will and act together: thus, as regards the sending of the Holy Spirit into the world, we can say that the Father sends the Spirit, the Son sends the Spirit, and the Spirit too sends Himself. Hence, the Holy Spirit Himself both "sends and consents to be sent". See Hom. VIII, 9; and St. Gregory of Nyssa, *To Ablabius: That There Are Not Three Gods* (PG 45:125C), Eng. ed. E. R. Hardy and C. C. Richardson (Philadelphia, 1954), pp.

261–262, where we find the now classic schema, namely, that the operation of the All Holy Trinity is always *from* the Father, *through* the Son, and *in* the Holy Spirit (*ἐκ* τοῦ Πατρὸς, *διὰ* τοῦ Ὑιοῦ, *ἐν* ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι).

365. Gk. συμφυὲς καὶ ὁμοσθενὲς καὶ συνεργὸν καὶ ὁμότιμον.

366. Gk. καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ γῆς ὀφθεὶς καὶ συναναστραφεὶς ἡμῖν; *cf.* n. 309 above.

367. Gk. καὶ τοῖς αὐτῷ πειθαρχοῦσιν θεουργὰ καὶ σωτήρια.

368. Gk. καθάπερ καὶ συνεπηγγείλατο.

369. Gk. ἡ γὰρ φωνὴ τῆς αὔρας ἦχός ἐστι πνοῆς.

370. Gk. κατ᾽ ἰδίαν ὑπόστασιν.

371. Gk. τὸ διὰ τῶν προφητῶν λαλῆσαν, *cf.* the *Symbol of Faith* of Nicaea-Constantinople, 381.

372. Gk. ἐν ἰδίᾳ ὑποστάσει.

373. Gk. δεσποτικῶς.

374. Gk. δι᾽ ἑκάστης τῶν ἐνεργειῶν ὅλον πάρεστι καὶ ἐνεργεῖ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ἀμερίστως μεριζόμενον καὶ ὁλοσχερῶς μετεχόμενον, κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς ἡλιακῆς ἀκτῖνος, *cf.* St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* XXII.

375. St. Gregory is referring here to the importance of "apostolic succession", that is to say, to the line of bishops and churches, which may be traced back to the apostles. The earliest extant allusion to the technical term may be found in St. Hegessipus (2nd cent.), preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea, *History of the Church* IV, 22, 1–3; see also St. Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians* XLII, 1–5 and XLIV, 1–6; and esp. St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies* III, 3, 1 and 4; IV, 26, 2; 33, 8; V, 20, 1; and Tertullian (*c.* 160 – *c.* 225), *Ruling* or *Demurrer* [*Praescriptio*] *Against the Heretics* XX, 4–9; XXI, 1–7; and XXXII, 1–8; and in *Against Marcion* IV, 5, 1–3; and Clement of Alexandria, *Who is the Rich Man that is Saved?* XLII, 2; and *cf.* St. Ignatius of Antioch (*c.* 35 – *c.* 107), *Letter to the Trallians* II, 1 – III, 2.

376. A reference to the fierce politico-religious disputes raging at this time, during which the Zealots, led by members of the house of the Palaeologi, and recognizing only John V Palaeologus (1341 – 1391), refused to acknowledge John VI Cantacuzenus (1347 – 1354) as Emperor. Because of his association with Cantacuzenus, St. Gregory had been refused entry into the city twice, once in 1347 and then again in 1348 (see n. 1 above), and consequently took up his see only after the collapse of Zealot rule – towards the end of 1349 (see also n. 676 below).

377. Gk. ἄναρχος (of the Father), *unoriginate, without beginning, pre-eternal*; συνάναρχος (esp. of the Son), *likewise unoriginate, also without beginning.*

likewise or *also pre-eternal*. See *e.g.* St. Athanasius the Great, *The Decrees of the Council of Nicaea* 32, and *Against the Arians* II, 2.

378. *Cf.* the second *idiomelon* for the Lauds or Praises of Matins for the feast of Pentecost: “The Holy Spirit ever was and is and will be, having neither beginning nor ending” (τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον ἦν μὲν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔστι καὶ ἔσται. οὔτε ἀρξάμενον, οὔτε παυσόμενον).

379. Gk. πληροῦν ἀϊδίου δόξης καὶ τὰ σώματα.

380. At the time in question, that is to say, probably at Pentecost of 1350 (see nn. 41 and 56 above), Thessalonica was under immediate threat of invasion from the Serbs, led by Stephan Dušan (1331 – 1355, tzar from 1345), who had already taken the greater part of Macedonia. *Cf.* John VI Cantacuzenus' employment of similar language in *e.g.* his famous *History* II, 80, where he says the following: “Should we succeed with God's help in bringing the Latins living in the Peloponnese under the control of the Empire, then the Catalans in Attica and Boeotia will acknowledge us, either voluntarily or by compulsion. And the power of the Romans will stretch from the Peloponnese to Byzantium as it used to, and it is obvious that it will then be easy to demand satisfaction from the Serbs and the other neighbouring barbarian peoples for all the insults that they have heaped upon us for so long”; found in G. Ostrogorsky's *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. J. Hussey (Oxford, 1980, repr. ed. 1984), p. 510. At the same time, however, it was the Turks – the Seljuqs, and especially the Ottomans, with their expansionist drive across the northern part of the Aegean Sea and in Asia Minor – who in the longer term were to pose the greater threat.

381. Gk. ἀρσενοκοῖται, from the verb ἀρσενοκοιτέω, *commit sodomy*; the AV reads: “nor abusers of themselves with *mankind*”.

382. *Cf.* the words preceding the Lord's Prayer in the Divine Liturgy: “that boldly and without condemnation we may dare to lift our voices unto thee, O heavenly God and Father, and say”, trans. taken from *The Orthodox Liturgy*, The Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, Essex (Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 82.

Homily Twenty-Five

383. With the Sunday of All Saints, the first Sunday after Pentecost, the cycle of moveable feasts in the liturgical calendar of the Orthodox Church draws to a close. This cycle began with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee (see Hom. II, n. 5), and had at its epicentre the Sunday of Pascha (Easter), the Feast of Feasts. Originally dedicated to the Triumphant Martyrs (see St. John Chrysostom, *On the Holy Martyrs*, PG 50:705–712), this feast was later expanded (probably during the reign of Leo VI the Wise, Emperor from 886 – 912) to

include all the saints, both known and unknown, throughout the ages. As such, it is also the feast to which every Christian looks with earnest expectation, for it sets before us, in a concrete and graphic manner, the very purpose of our existence: to become "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), see Fountoulis, *Reasonable Worship, op. cit.*, pp. 132–137. Furthermore, the liturgical sequence of the feasts of *The Pentecostarion* (a liturgical book containing the services from Easter Sunday to the Sunday of All Saints) is significant, as it points to the pattern of the manifestation of God the Holy Trinity in the divine economy, namely, that it is the Son and Word of God who in and through His saving work, culminating in the Sunday of Pascha, reveals God the Father to the world, that it is the Holy Spirit who bears witness to the full and perfect divinity of the Son (Sunday of Pentecost), and that it is the communion of the saints, that is the Church, who together affirm the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son (Sunday of All Saints).

384. Only by the grace of God, only, that is, by being united with "Him Who Is", are we able to transcend the limitations of our created human nature; for thereby are we transported to the plane of uncreated divine life, which is, by definition, unlimited.

385. Gk. οἱ προαίρεσιν ἀγαθὴν κεκτημένοι.

386. Gk. δι᾽ ἔργων.

387. Gk. τὸ τῆς διανοίας ὄμμα.

388. Matt. 10:32–33, 37–38; 19:27–30.

389. This is the literal meaning of the original Greek, which reads: πᾶς οὖν ὅστις ὁμολογήσει ἐν ἐμοί.

390. Taking the Greek literally: ὁμολογήσω καγὼ ἐν αὐτῷ.

391. Gk. εὐδαιμονία.

392. Notice the holistic understanding of deification in Christ, to which holy relics bear witness.

393. The AV reads "life" for ψυχή, lit. *soul.*

HOMILY TWENTY-SIX

394. This homily was delivered on the Third Sunday of Matthew, that is to say, during that part of the ecclesiastical year in which pericopes taken from the Gospel according to St. Matthew are read in church, in this case Matt. 6:22–33, and more specifically, in the month of June, which is when the harvest would take place in the plains surrounding Thessalonica.

395. As we have already noted, St. Gregory regards man as the crowning point of God's creation (see Hom. III, 5, esp. n. 21 above). What is most striking about his exulted vision of man, however, is the fact that the human person is viewed not only as a "microcosm", encompassing both the material and spiritual worlds in his person, but indeed as a "micro-*theos*" – a "god in miniature" – for even though man, like all other creatures, has been created out of nothing, he has been fashioned and purposed to contain *divine* and *uncreated life*, and, indeed, to contain it more perfectly even than the ranks of the heavenly powers; see esp. St. Maximus the Confessor, in his *Ambigua* XLI, who describes the human person in terms of a "workshop" or "laboratory" (ἐργαστήριον), in whom the five levels of duality in the cosmos are to be unified: male (ἀρσενικός) and female (θηλυκός), paradise (παράδεισος) and the world (οἰκουμένη, lit. the *place inhabited* by men), heaven (οὐρανός, here meaning *sky*, *cf.* Hom. XVII, 4, n. 242) and earth (γῆ), the intelligible or noetic (νοητός) and the sensible (αἰσθητός) worlds, and finally, the uncreated (τὸ ἄκτιστον) and created nature (κτιστὴ φύσις); and St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his *On the Creation of Man* II, 1, PG 44:133A, who identifies man as the last (because he is the greatest) of God's creatures (*cf.* esp. Hom. LIII, 55); and see also Hom. VI, 10, n. 66; Hom. XIV, 1, n. 193; and *cf.* Hom. VIII, 8, n. 98, and Hom. XI, 12, nn. 149–151.

396. Gk. νοῦν γὰρ καὶ αἴσθησιν ἑαυτῷ συνῆψεν ἀρρήτως. Much of the wording of §§ 1 and 2 has been borrowed from Hom. LIII, 55–56, one of St. Gregory's earliest homilies (see my "Introduction", p. xxv above).

397. Gk. φαντασίᾳ καὶ δόξῃ καὶ διανοίᾳ. See also Hom. LIII, 55, n. 886.

398. Note that St. Gregory sees a certain analogy between the universe (understood from the scientific aspect in more or less Aristotelian terms, see Hom. III, 5, nn. 22–23; Hom. VI, 6–9; XVII, 4–5, nn. 239–243), and man.

399. *Cf.* Hom. LIII, 55.

400. See esp. Hom. IV, 8, n. 39; and Hom. VI, 10, n. 66; and *cf.* n. 893 below.

401. Gk. καντεῦθεν ταῖς κατὰ νοῦν ἐπιστήμαις τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐχαρίσατο. Palamas is well aware of the fact that the scientific knowledge of his day was far from complete, and thus very much in the process of developing.

402. *Cf.* Hom. LIII, 56.

403. Gk. πολλαπλοῦν, from πολλαπλόος (contr. –πλοῦς), lit. *manifold*; metaph. *not simple and straightforward* (Liddell and Scott, *s.v.*).

404. Note that the Septuagint uses here the Greek word θέρος (Hatch and Redpath, *op. cit.*, *s.v.*), which can mean either *summer* or *harvest, harvest time* (see Liddell and Scott, *s.v.*); and this is, of course, a translation of the Hebrew קַיִץ, *qayis*, which similarly may mean either *summer* or *summer-fruit* (see *A*

Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, With Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic, ed. F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, Oxford, repr. ed. 1978, *s.v.*). St. Gregory, as this passage clearly shows, has both meanings in mind. The AV reads: "thou hast made summer and winter".

405. Gk. ἀληθῆ θεοσέβειαν.

406. This is the distinction between "eternal being" (ἀεὶ εἶναι), and "eternal well-being" (ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι), to which St. Maximus the Confessor refers in his *Ambigua* XLII (PG 91:1325BC); and *cf.* St. Gregory the Theologian, *On Holy Baptism*, Oration XL, 2; see also Hom. XIV, 1, n. 193. Note that there is no room here for an Origenistic *apokatastasis*, see Hom. XIX, 1, n. 273.

407. Gk. ἀδηφαγία καὶ πολυποσία.

408. Gk. τὰ μυσαρὰ ῥήματα καὶ ἀκούσματα.

409. Gk. ὡραΐσματα τε καὶ ἐπιτρίμματα.

410. See n. 381 above.

411. Gk. ἔνθα ἀπέδρα πᾶσα ὀδύνη καὶ λύπη καὶ στεναγμός, which is a very mildly adapted form of a line from the Prayer for the Departed, "O God of spirits and of all flesh . . ." (Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός . . .); see also Hom. XXXII, 10, n. 485, where it is quoted again; and *cf.* a similar line in the *troparion*, "With Thy Saints, give rest, O Christ . . ." (Μετὰ τῶν Ἁγίων ἀνάπαυσον, Χριστέ . . .), sung during the Canon for the Service for the Reposed, and at memorial services, which reads: "where there is neither pain, nor sorrow, nor sighing" (ἔνθα οὐκ ἔστι πόνος, οὐ λύπη, οὐ στεναγμός).

HOMILY TWENTY-SEVEN

412. This homily was probably delivered on Tuesday of the Sixth Week of Matthew's Gospel, since that is the day on which the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:24–30) is assigned to be read; see §§ 5 and 6 below, and *cf.* Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, pp. 10–11.

413. *Cf.* Hom. XVII, 2, n. 233. Christ's word is charged, loaded, with His divine energy, life and power, and so too are the words of His saints, who, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, have filled themselves with His words, and have lived according to His command and example, loving their enemies even as He did – even as He does. What is true of God by nature can become true of man by grace. Hence, even the words of those who have become united with God contain the same energy and force as those of God. That is why Palamas can speak so boldly, saying that his is "a lasting word that will bring salvation to those who believe and act accordingly". And that is why it is so important, when one hears "the word" spoken by God-bearing hierarchs and priests – especially when one is under spiritual direction – to accept it as

from God, without question, see *e.g.* St. John Climacus, Step 4: "On Blessed and Ever-memorable Obedience", in *The Ladder of Divine Ascent, op. cit.*; St. Symeon the New Theologian, on the Spiritual Father, in *Catechetical Sermons, op. cit.*, XX, 3–6; and esp. the sections on "Discovering the Will of God" and "On Obedience", in Archimandrite Sophrony's *Saint Silouan the Athonite, op. cit.*, pp. 77–87.

414. See Hom. XXVI, 13; and also n. 412 above.

415. The Fathers always view the person in terms of his or her potential, and, knowing that God is ready to accept the repentance of a sinner even at the eleventh hour, leave judgment to Him, who alone searches out the depths of our hearts (Jer. 11:20; 17:10, Rom. 8:27, Rev. 2:23, *cf.* 1 Chr. 28:9).

416. Gk. Διὰ τῆς τῶν ἔργων ὁμοιότητος.

HOMILY TWENTY-EIGHT

417. Celebrated on 29 June. This feast was instituted by Sixtus II (Pope from 257 to 258) on 29 June of 258, when the relics of these two great apostles were translated to the catacomb of St. Sebastian in Rome. The Gospel reading for the Liturgy of the day is Matt. 16:13–19: St. Peter's confession of Christ at Caesarea Philippi.

418. Gk. καλλοποιὸν δύναμιν, from καλλοποιός, lit. *producing beauty, beauty-causing, cf.* esp. St. Dionyisius the Areopagite, in his *The Celestial Hierarchy* VII, 2, and his *On the Divine Names* IV, 7.

419. The phrase ὑπὲρ αἴσθησιν, lit. *above* or *beyond sense,* and so *suprasensible,* refers to those things which lie beyond the perception of the human senses, to things spiritual, which are perceptible to the human mind or *nous* (νοῦς). This, however, according to St. Gregory, is not the highest plane of knowledge attainable by man. Ultimate knowledge of God is given in the experience of deification (θέωσις), in which the human person is united with God and enters into perfect communion with Him, and which is a state of being not only *beyond knowledge* (as in the Platonic tradition, see *e.g. Republic* VI, 509B), but even *beyond unknowing* (see esp. n. 872 below). Hence, in the experience of deification, every aspect of man's being is transcended, inasmuch as he is raised far beyond the level of the created human *nous* to the plane of uncreated Triune life. See also Hom. XI, 24, n. 161, Hom. XVII, 6, n. 244, *cf.* Hom. XIII, 7, n. 183, Hom. XVII, 7, n. 247, and Hom. LIII, 51, n. 872.

420. That is to say, tempting him with a thought (λογισμός), which appeared at first to be both reasonable and good.

421. Gk. ἐγκαταλιμπάνεται (from ἐγκαταλείπω), lit. *abandoned, forsaken* or *deserted.* When we fall away from God, the resulting spiritual condition is

one of apparent desertion by God. The truth is, however, that it is we that have abandoned Him, and have departed from His will, which can only lead to sorrow and despair. And yet, God continues to work ceaselessly for our salvation, and patiently awaits our repentance.

422. Gk. Τῇ ἑαυτοῦ πάραυτα καταγνώσει καὶ τῇ σφοδρᾷ λύπῃ καὶ μετανοίᾳ.

423. That is, the Gospel reading for Matins (the Eleventh Matins Gospel): John 21:15–25. *Cf.* n. 417 above.

424. Gk. καθηγητής, ref. bishops, see St. Constantine the Great (d. 337), *Oration before the Assembly of the Saints* I, preserved among the works of Eusebius of Caesarea, see PG 20:1233A, found in Lampe, *s.v.*; in this context, synonymous with St. Gregory's use of διδάσκαλος, see *e.g.* Hom. III, 1, n. 19; and Hom. XIII, 1, n. 178. And on the importance of finding a spiritual father, "an imitator of the apostles", see also Hom. XVII, 22.

425. "Slaves" (δοῦλοι) are those who serve God out of fear of the future punishment; "hirelings" or "hired servants" (μίσθιοι or μισθωτοί), are "those who through sweat and repentance and humility gain salvation as their reward"; and "sons (υἱοί), by contrast, are those who obey God's commandments out of love" (Hom. III, 19; and *cf.* Hom. IV, 15); see esp. St. Basil the Great, *The Longer Rules* I (*Prelude*), 3; and his *Homily on Psalm 34:6*, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him"; St. Dorotheus of Gaza, *Spiritual Discourses* IV, 48–49, "On the Fear of God", and XIV, 157, "On Building up Virtues and their Harmony"; Eng. trans. Wheeler, *op. cit.*, and Scouteris, *op. cit.*; St. John Climacus, Step 1: "On Renunciation of the World", and Step 8: "On Freedom from Anger and on Meekness", in *The Ladder of Divine Ascent, op. cit.*, pp. 4 and 85, respectively; and also St. Maximus the Confessor, in the final section (*Recapitulation*) of his *Mystagogy* 24 (PG 91:709D–712A).

426. *Cf.* Hom. V, 13.

427. As St. John Damascene explains, even though our human nature is brought into being "out of nothing" (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος), its natural inclination (ἔφεσις), implanted in it by the Creator, is towards "being" (εἶναι), and not towards "non-being" (μὴ εἶναι); and it is because of this that Christ Himself experienced "fear" (δειλία or φόβος), or rather a certain "shrinking" (συστολή) from death before His passion, see *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 23. This kind of "fear" or "agony" (ἀγωνία) is therefore numbered among the "natural and blameless passions" (φυσικὰ καὶ ἀδιάβλητα πάθη), and was *voluntarily* accepted or assumed by Christ at the incarnation, see *On the Orthodox Faith* III, 20; Hom. VIII, 8, n. 96; and *cf.* Hom. XVI, 5, nn. 208–209. That is why St. John Climacus can say of the God-man, Δειλιᾷ Χριστὸς θάνατον, οὐ τρέμει, that is to say, "Christ fears" or "shrinks away from death, but does not

tremble" or "is not terrified by it", Step. 6, "On Remembrance of Death", in *The Ladder of Divine Ascent, op. cit.*, p. 66.

428. Gk. ἅπερ ὑπὲρ φύσιν ὄντα θέλειν ἡ φύσις οὐ πέφυκε. In other words, to will to suffer and die for Christ is not a natural desire (*cf.* n. 427 above), but a supranatural one (ὑπὲρ φύσιν); one, that is, which surpasses the fundamental urge of our created human nature to live. The very desire to suffer and die for Christ, therefore, the desire to become like Him in this self-sacrificing, *kenotic* (or *self-emptying*) way (*cf.* Phil. 2:5–11), is a pure gift bestowed from on high.

429. St. Gregory is probably drawing the congregation's attention here to the icon of SS. Peter and Paul, in which they are traditionally depicted as standing on either side of, and holding, a small church; emphasizing thereby the fact that they are honoured and revered by Christians as pillars of the universal Church. *Cf.* n. 417 above.

430. Gk. αὐτομεμψία, *self-condemnation, self-accusation,* which is perhaps even better rendered as *self-hatred,* appears at first sight to be a rather heavy and somewhat discouraging term. In the Patristic tradition, however, it refers to that spiritual disposition, which is necessary if one is truly to deny one's self, take up one's cross, and follow Christ (*cf.* Matt. 16:24, Mark 8:34, and Luke 9:23). *Self-condemnation,* therefore, is the spirit of the Cross, the spirit of martyrdom and repentance. But far from being an occasion for sorrow and despair, it is the only way that can lead to salvation and eternal joy: "For behold, by the Cross is joy come into all the world" (from the *troparion,* "Let us who have beheld Christ's Resurrection . . ."). Without *self-condemnation* – that is to say, as long as we are still governed by the spirit of *self-love* (φιλαυτία) – it is not possible for us to make a full and clean confession, and to be spiritually healed. *Cf.* also Hom. XVII, 2, Hom. XLVII, 4 and 13, and Hom. XLIX, 9–10.

431. Gk. ἐγκρατεύεσθαι πάντα.

Homily Twenty-Nine

432. The Sixth Sunday of Matthew, for which the Gospel reading is Matt. 9:1–8. Between the sixth and fourteenth centuries, the Healing of the Paralysed Man in Capernaum was also the theme for the Second Sunday in Lent (based on Mark 2:1–12, see Hom. X above). And even though the earlier theme has since been superceded by the celebration of St. Gregory himself (see Hom. III, 3, n. 20; and Hom. X, 1 and 4, nn. 119 and 125), the Markan account (in Mark 2:1–12) still remains the chief Gospel reading for the Second Sunday in Lent. Note also that these two Synoptic accounts of the Healing of the Paralysed Man in Capernaum (Matt. 9:1–8 and Mark 2:1–12) are not to be confused with the Healing of the Paralytic in Jerusalem, which is the Gospel reading for the Third Sunday after

Pascha (John 5:1–15; and see Hom. X, n. 125), and for which no homily survives in this collection.

433. Gk. περὶ τῆς κατὰ Θεὸν λύπης.

434. In the Septuagint the Heb. חֵךְ, *chêkh,* lit. *palate* or *throat,* is usually rendered as λάρυγξ, *the upper part of the windpipe* or *larynx* (see *e.g.* S. of S. 2:3, and 7:9), and sometimes also given as φάρυγξ, *throat* or *windpipe (gullet),* see *e.g.* S. of S. 5:16; *cf.* Hatch and Redpath, *op. cit.*; and Liddell and Scott, *s.vv.* The AV sometimes translates חֵךְ as *mouth,* for which the Heb. is actually פֶּה, *peh* (see *e.g.* S. of S. 5:16), and sometimes as *taste* (see *e.g.* S. of S. 2:3).

435. Gk. ὅλος ἐπιθυμία (= Lxx); Heb. וְכֻלּוֹ מַחֲמַדִּים, *wᵉkhullô machamaddîm* (from the theoretical sing. form of adj. מַחְמָד, *machmâdh, desirable*; from the verb חָמַד, *châmadh, to desire*). The AV reads: "altogether lovely".

436. See Hom. X; and n. 432 above.

437. That is to say, honey mingled with wax: the inner spiritual meaning of the story, represented by honey, in contrast to its basic, literal sense, represented by the wax (see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 12).

438. "At that time" (Gk. Τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ). Gospel readings in the Orthodox Church often begin with this formula. See also n. 1190 below (Hom. LXII, 2).

439. The Gospel reading for the Third Sunday after Pascha, for which no homily survives in this collection (see n. 112 above).

440. See Hom. X, 4–5.

441. *Ibid.*, 13.

442. Gk. τῆς οἰκείας καταγνώσεως, τῆς τῶν ἡμαρτημένων ἐξομολογήσεως, τῆς πρὸς ἀποχὴν τῶν κακῶν ὑποσχέσεως, καὶ τῆς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν δεήσεως, *ibid.*, 12.

443. Gk. ὡς ἐπὶ κλήνης τῆς ἡδυπαθείας.

444. Gk. διδάσκαλοι καὶ μεσίται.

445. Gk. κατήφεια.

446. The AV reads: "and he made him to suck honey out of the rock".

447. The literal translation here is: "we, having been made by God *self-governing* (αὐτεξούσιοι)"; see n. 39 above (Hom. IV, 8).

448. The Massoretic text reads: "Yet forty days . . .".

449. Gk. τοῦ σωτηρίου πένθους.

450. Not chronologically, of course, but as an example of repentance (see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 242, n. 23).

451. Gk. πρὸς τὴν σωτήριον ταύτην λύπην καὶ τὸ πένθος καὶ τὴν κατάνυξιν.

452. Gk. μετριοπαθής.

HOMILY THIRTY

453. The Gospel reading for the Seventh Sunday of Matthew, Matt. 9:27–35. As the words in § 3 below indicate ("as we shall hear in today's reading from Matthew's Gospel"), this homily was delivered before the Liturgy, probably during the all-night vigil for the Sunday (see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 12).

454. Gk. κηρύξαι τοῖς τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν.

455. Gk. τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς ἀκαθαρσίαν ρύσιν ἰασάμενον. The instability or flux (ρύσις) of our human nature is the direct result of the ancestral sin; see Hom. XIV, 5, n. 194; Hom. XVI, 6; and also Hom. XXII, 3, n. 331.

456. St. Gregory is referring here to the concluding part of the Liturgy, called the Dismissal (Gk. ἀπόλυσις), which begins with the words, "Let us depart in peace" (Ἐν εἰρήνῃ προέλθωμεν) – to which the reply is, "In the name of the Lord" (Ἐν ὀνόματι Κυρίου) – when the priest "leaves the sanctuary", and, "standing in the midst of the congregation", reads aloud "the prayer behind the ambo" (Gk. ὀπισθάμβωνος εὐχή: "O Lord who dost bless them that bless thee . . .", Ὁ εὐλογῶν τοὺς εὐλογοῦντάς σε, Κύριε . . .), or, in churches where there is no ambo, "the prayer below the chancel steps". This is immediately followed by the thrice-intoned doxology, from Ps. 113:2, "Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore" (Εἴη τὸ ὄνομα Κυρίου εὐλογημένον, ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος); *cf.* Job 1:21. See esp. St. Gregory's near contemporary, St. Nicholas Cabasilas, VI, 53 *Interpretation of the Divine Liturgy*; Eng. trans. J. M. Hussey and P. A. McNulty (SPCK), pp. 119–120.

457. Gk. τοῖς ἀφωτίστοις, lit. *those who have not been illumined* or *enlightened.*

HOMILY THIRTY-ONE

458. The litany in question is for the feast of the Procession of the Precious and Life-giving Cross (ἡ πρόοδος τοῦ τιμίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ Σταυροῦ), which begins on the day of the feast, 1 August (*cf.* Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 276, n. 1), and continues until 14 August, the leave-taking for the feast of the Transfiguration, and the eve of the feast of the Dormition. As St. Gregory himself says (see § 16 below), August marked the climax of the most difficult period for diseases and illness in the entire year. For this reason a custom developed at Constantinople which later also spread to many other parts of the Orthodox world: to carry the Cross through the streets of the town in solemn procession, asking God to sanctify the place, and to heal its inhabitants of their maladies.

459. Another reference to the principle of *self-governance* (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον) in man, see n. 39 (Hom. IV, 8).

460. On the death of the soul preceding that of the body, see also Hom. X, 9, Hom. XI, 1, and Hom. XVI, 1, 7–8, and 25.

461. Gk. ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐγκατάλειψις.

462. Gk. αὐτοζωή.

463. See Hom. XVI, 8, n. 214.

464. Gk. φρόνημα ταπεινόν.

465. Gk. ἡ τοῦ καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς πνεύματος τῆς ψυχῆς ταπείνωσις, lit. *the humility of our soul's spirit.*

466. Gk. ζωῆς . . . τῆς ἀϊδίου καὶ θεοειδοῦς. Notice that it is God's good pleasure not only for us to exist eternally, but to exist on the level of "pre-eternal and Godlike life", that is to say, to be raised up to the plane of the life of the Holy Trinity.

467. Only God, who is *life itself* (αὐτοζωή), has absolute existence. Death, which has no original existence, but is the result of the rejection of true life, is thus but a distortion and perversion of life. Compare what St. Gregory is saying here to the following passage, taken from Elder Sophrony Sakharov's description of evil, in his *Saint Silouan the Athonite, op. cit.*, p. 117: "God alone is absolute. Evil, which has no original essence but is merely the resistance of the free creature to Him that is before all ages – to God – cannot be absolute. Therefore evil in the literal sense does not, and cannot, exist. All evil effected by free beings must live like a parasite on the body of the good."

468. See n. 463 above.

469. The LXX reads: "and I shall be groaning and trembling upon the earth"; the AV: "I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth".

470. For St. Gregory's knowledge of fourteenth-century medical science, see *e.g.* Hom. IX, 3, n. 107, and Hom. XII, 4, n. 167.

471. Chiefly due to malaria, which would break out and cause much ruin both in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 299, n. 11.

472. See nn. 458 and 470 above.

473. St. Gregory is referring here to the service known as "The Lesser Sanctification" or "Blessing of the Waters" (ἀκολουθία τοῦ μικροῦ ἁγιασμοῦ), usually performed at the beginning of the ecclesiastical year (1 September; unless the local practice requires that it be deferred until the feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, on 14 September), at the start of each month of the year (except for January, in deference to the

"Great Blessing of the Waters", on 6 January), as also on various other occasions as the need arises. In this instance, the service of the Blessing of the Waters is performed towards the end of the service for the feast of the Procession of the Cross (see n. 458 above) – following the prayer behind the ambo – at the end of which the faithful go up to venerate the Cross and to be sprinkled with the blessed water. Its purpose is to heal bodily and spiritual maladies, and also to bless or sanctify the homes and labours of the faithful. As such, it is unrelated to, and so to be distinguished from, the service referred to as "The Great Sanctification" or "Blessing of the Waters" (ἀκολουθία τοῦ μεγάλου ἁγιασμοῦ), performed on the feast of the Holy Theophany (6 January), which commemorates the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan.

474. Inhabitants of Ekron, in the far north of the land of the Philistines (Palestine), where Baal was worshipped, see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 300, n. 12.

475. Gk. οἱ παρὰ γοήτων καὶ μάντεων ἐπιζητοῦντές τι μαθεῖν ἢ παθεῖν. Evidently, the pastoral problem of witchcraft and soothsaying was also current in St. Gregory's time.

HOMILY THIRTY-TWO

476. Matt. 14:22–34: Christ Walking on the Water. As Chrestou points out (*op. cit.*, vol. 10, pp. 13–14), the Thessalonians were probably under siege around the time that this homily was being delivered (see Hom. XXIV, 16, n. 380). Hence its general theme: about enduring temptations in times of great tribulations.

477. It is within man's own natural power to act virtuously, *cf.* Hom. VI, 2: "every human soul is naturally suited to virtue", that is, created for virtue.

478. The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, for which the Gospel reading is Matt. 14:14–22.

479. Gk. σκάφος.

480. St. John the Divine was exiled from Ephesus to Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation (see Rev. 1:9).

481. Three Roman Emperors, during whose reigns some of the fiercest persecutions in the early Church took place. Probably both SS. Peter and Paul were martyred in Nero's time (54 – 68). According to tradition, it was in the Emperor Domitian's reign (81 – 96) that St. John the Divine was exiled (see n. 160 above). And it was under Trajan (98 – 117), that the apostolic Father, St. Ignatius of Antioch, the God-bearer (Θεοφόρος), was martyred (*c.* 107).

482. Gk. ἵνα γυμνάσῃ πρὸς ὑπομονὴν καὶ φερεπόνους αὐτοὺς ποιήσῃ.

483. Gk. ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ καὶ Θεὸς ὢν ἀεί.

484. For the natural and written laws, and the law of grace or of Christ's gospel, see Hom. III, 7–8, nn. 24 and 27, and Hom. XXI, 16.

485. *Cf.* Hom. XXVI, 12, n. 411 above.

486. See n. 476 above.

HOMILY THIRTY-THREE

487. This homily was also delivered during the litany for 1 August (see n. 458); in a year, however, when the Ninth Sunday of Matthew's Gospel fell before the feast of the Procession of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, which is why, in this collection, Hom. XXXII is placed between Homs. XXXI and XXXIII (see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 14).

488. Gk. καὶ ἐν λόγω καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ πνευματικῇ καθ' ἡμέραν μὲν τοῖς προσιοῦσιν, ref. to St. Gregory's capacity as "spiritual father" or "guide". For St. Gregory's understanding of the place and significance of the spiritual father, see *e.g.* Hom. I, 8, Hom. III, 1, n. 19, Hom. XIII, 1, n. 178, Hom. XVII, 2 (n. 233) and 22, and Hom. XXVIII, 8, n. 424.

489. Gk. οὐκ ἰδιώτας μόνον ἔχει.

490. It is the duty of every Christian pastor to strive to initiate all the faithful placed under his charge into the life in Christ, intellectuals and non-intellectuals alike, without prejudice (*cf.* Hom. XVII, 2, n. 233). St. Gregory, moreover, as already noted elsewhere (see Hom. XI, 21, n. 158), refuses to water down the Christian *kerygma*, recognizing that the only way to keep the doors of true repentance open to all is by pointing to the perfection which is to be found only in and through Christ, who is true and perfect God and true and perfect man.

491. Gk. ἰδιῶται, *cf.* § 3, n. 489 above.

492. *Cf. ibid.*

493. Gk. ἡ πρὸς τὸ σῶμα ἡμῶν ἀγάπη, *love for our body*, which in the Patristic tradition refers to an anthropocentrism that seeks to usurp what belongs to God alone, to a placing of one's self at the centre of the universe; see §§ 8 and 12 below, and Hom. XLIII, 59, n. 922; and *cf.* St. Maximus the Confessor, who identifies "self-love" (φιλαυτία) – "the mother of the passions" – with "the passion of attachment to the body" (τὸ πρὸς τὸ σῶμα πάθος), *Second Century on Love* 8; trans. *The Philokalia, op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 66; or, as he puts it in his *Third Century on Love* 8; *ibid.*, p. 84, with "an impassioned, mindless love for one's body" (ἡ πρὸς τὸ σῶμα ἐμπαθὴς καὶ ἄλογος φιλία). Ironically, therefore, love for our body, which is marked by a self-centred focus on one's

own well-being, is anti-personal, inasmuch as it constitutes a refusal to refer ourselves and all creation back to God, the tri-personal source and giver of life, and hence leads to the disintegration of our personhood, and thus ultimately to non-being.

494. Gk. διὰ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν κατ᾽ αὐτὸ εὐπάθειαν τὸν κόσμον ἀγαπῶμεν, see n. 493 above, and Hom. XLIII, 59, n. 922 below.

495. Gk. τρυφή.

496. Gk. γαστριμαργία, λαιμαργία, καὶ πολυποσία καὶ μέθη. A subtle distinction is to be drawn between *gluttony* (γαστριμαργία) and *eating delicacies* (λαιμαργία). The former refers to "eating to excess", while the latter signifies "pleasing the palate", "delighting" or "indulging in the sense of taste".

497. Gk. ἀκολασία.

498. Gk. ἀσέλγεια.

499. Gk. φιλοκτημοσύνη.

500. Gk. φιλαργυρία.

501. Gk. πλεονεξία.

502. Gk. φαντασία; see esp. Hom. VII, 11, n. 84.

503. Gk. οἴησις.

504. Gk. φυσίωσις.

505. Gk. ἀλαζονεία.

506. Gk. ἀνθρωπαρέσκεια, or *seeking other people's approval*; see Hom. VI, 3, n. 62.

507. Gk. κενοδοξία καὶ ὑπερηφάνια.

508. Whenever the Fathers describe the gifts which God bestows upon His creatures – in this case "enjoyment" and "bliss", but also love, grace, peace, and the like – they are referring to nothing less than the condescension and manifestation and communion of God Himself. The phrase here, "shared out, without suffering any division", or more literally, "undividedly divided" (ἀμερίστως μεριζομένης), is important, because it points to the fact that when God gives Himself to His various creatures, He gives Himself wholly to each one, without Himself suffering any diminution or division whatsoever. This reality is attested to *par excellence* in the divine eucharist, where Christ is wholly present in each of the portions distributed to the faithful, as well as in that part which remains; and thus each of the faithful receives the whole Christ, *totus Christus,* while Christ Himself remains one and undivided; *cf. e.g.* St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration XXXVII,* Eng. trans. in *Documents in*

Early Christian Thought (Cambridge University Press, 1975) pp. 194–196, taken from J. H. Srawley, ed. (Cambridge, 1903), pp. 141–152.

509. St. Gregory is again referring to the fact that it is God who should be at the centre of our lives. We ought to have our entire being turned towards Him alone, without allowing ourselves to be distracted by anything in any way, even by the immense beauty of the world. Thus, St. Gregory does not mean that the world is necessarily the cause of evil and sin, since this is always dependant upon man's disposition towards it (*cf.* n. 331 above). However, when God's creation is approached in a non-eucharistic fashion, when, that is, it is not "referred back" to God in thanksgiving, then it is abused (see § 14 below), and the whole character of our life in this world becomes distorted. Our attention is distracted away from God, and our energy is directed towards things other than our salvation. In this sense, then, it is true to say that the world may be described as a double-edged sword. *Cf.* Homs. VI, 2 and LI, 2, nn. 60 and 772, respectively.

510. Gk. λοιδορίαι, καταλαλιαί, συκοφαντίαι, θυμός, μῖσος, ἔριδες, φθόνος, καὶ πᾶσα πικρίας γέμουσα ἐπιθυμία.

511. Gk. ἡ εἰρωνεία καὶ κολακία, καὶ ὁ δόλος καὶ ἡ ὑπόκρισις.

512. See esp. nn. 11 and 509 above.

513. Gk. φιλήδονοι.

HOMILY THIRTY-FOUR

514. This homily was delivered during the all-night vigil for the feast of the Transfiguration (see § 7 below), and is based, therefore, mainly on the Gospel reading for Matins, Luke 9:28–36; though St. Gregory also brings in the other two Synoptic accounts, Matt. 17:1–9 and Mark 9:2–8.

515. Gk. τοῖς τοῦ φωτὸς πολεμίοις. By "enemies of the light", St. Gregory is referring to the supporters of his three main theological opponents, namely, Barlaam the Calabrian, Gregory Akindynus, and especially his most recent adversary, Nicephorus Gregoras; all of whom claimed that the light of Tabor was either a created light (so Barlaam, in the first phase of the Hesychast Controversy, Akindynus and Gregoras), or that it was a manifestation of the very essence of God (Barlaam in the second phase of the controversy). The latter position is the subject of St. Gregory's second homily on the transfiguration, Hom. XXXV, which aims to prove "that although the divine light of the Transfiguration is uncreated, it is not God's essence". See Hom. VIII, 10, nn. 100 and 101; 13, n. 103, Hom. XI, 12, n. 149, Hom. XVI, 19, n. 218, and also nn. 37–38 (Hom. IV, 3), 103 (Hom. VIII, 13), 150–151 (Hom. XI, 12),

193 (Hom. XIV, 1), above, and 523 (Hom. XXXIV, 10), 551 (Hom. XXXV, 16), and 879 (Hom. LIII, 52) below.

516. Gk. ὀγδόη ἡμέρα.

517. Gk. αἴσθησις.

518. Gk. προφορικὸς λόγος.

519. Gk. ἀπὸ τῆς σαρκὸς ἐπὶ τὸ πνεῦμα, *from flesh to spirit,* that is to say, as St. Maximus the Confessor explains, they were transported from the plane of the physical and human to that of the spiritual and divine, see his *Ambigua* X (PG 91:1125D), and also in his *Quaestiones et Dubia* 191; and Hom. LII, 15 below.

520. See St. John's *To Eutropius the Eunuch* II, 10.

521. Gk. θεοπτία, lit. *vision of God*, synonymous with θεωρία, *contemplation* (of God); see Hom. XI, 12, n. 148 and Hom. XXXIV, 10, n. 521 above, and Hom. LIII, 52, nn. 876–877, *cf.* also n. 746 (Hom. XLIX, 1) below. In the Orthodox Patristic tradition, *theoptia* is regarded as the basis of true theology. *Theoptia,* first and foremost, is a pure gift from God, granted only to those who, through constant prayer and practice of Christ's commandments, have passed from the purification of the passions and the cultivation of the virtues, through the illumination of the mind, heart and soul (Hom. XIII, 7, n. 149), to Christlike perfection, union and communion with God (Hom. XVII, 7, n. 247). See also Hom. XVI, 35–36.

522. *Cf.* esp. St. John Damascene, *Homily on the Transfiguration of Our Saviour Jesus Christ* X: "prayer is the manifestation of divine glory" (προσευχὴ δὲ θείας δόξης ἐμφάνεια); and that prayer becomes the agent of divine glory (τῆς θείας δόξης ἡ προσευχὴ καθίσταται πρόξενος). Note that in this second phrase Palamas uses the same term as Damascene, πρόξενος, *ambassador* or *agent.*

523. As will become clear in his second homily on the transfiguration (Hom. XXXV), St. Gregory is not employing the term "divine nature" in the philosophical or technical sense here. He is merely referring to God Himself, in that aspect of His Being with which we have been called to be united, and in which it is His good pleasure for us to participate; which is how we find it employed in 2 Pet. 1:4: "partakers of the divine nature" (θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως), see also n. 515 above.

524. Gk. εἰς τοῦτό με φέρει τὸ μέτριον ἐνταῦθα φέγγος τῆς ἀληθείας, λαμπρότητα θεοῦ καὶ ἰδεῖν καὶ παθεῖν, the literal rendering of the latter clause being, *to both see and* suffer *God's radiance*; quotation from St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration on the Holy Theophany, that is to say, On the Birth of Our Saviour* XXXVIII, 11; also cited by Palamas in his *Letter to John Gabras* 20, see Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ· Συγγράμματα* [*Gregory Palamas: The Writings*], vol. 2 (Thessalonica, 1966), p. 347.

525. See Hom. IV, 12, n. 41

526. Gk. ἄϋλον καὶ ἀνέσπερον καὶ ἀΐδιον.

527. Gk. ἄκτιστον.

528. Gk. αἰών, *aeon*, *age* or *world*, see n. 322 above. God, and every aspect of His Being, is pre-eternal, and thus before both time and the ages.

529. Gk. τῶν σωζομένων, see also Hom. XI, 15, n. 155.

530. Gk. Οὐκοῦν τῆς θεότητός ἐστι τὸ φῶς ἐκεῖνο, καὶ ἄκτιστόν ἐστιν.

531. St. John Damascene, *Homily on the Transfiguration of Our Saviour Jesus Christ* 12 (PG 96:564C).

532. St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* X (PG 91:1125D–1128A; esp. 1128CD and 1160CD).

533. Gk. τῆς πανιέρου καὶ θείας ἱερουργίας.

534. Variant reading, see the *apparatus criticus* of A. Rahlfs' *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart, 1935), p. 597.

Homily Thirty-Five

535. Delivered during the Liturgy for the feast of the Transfiguration (6 August), and thus based principally on the Gospel pericope of Matt. 17:1–9; see Hom. XXXIV, 17; and *cf.* n. 514 above.

536. Gk. λόγος συντετμημένος.

537. Gk. ἡ ἐνυπόστατος σοφία τοῦ Πατρός; or *the Wisdom of the Father in His very person*. See Hom. VIII, 8, n. 94.

538. *Apokatastasis*. Gk. ἀποκατάστασις. *Cf.* Hom. XIX, 1, n. 273.

539. *Cf.* St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *Letter* V (PG 3:1073A): "the dark cloud is the unapproachable light, in which God is said to dwell" (τὸ ἀπρόσιτον φῶς, ἐν ᾧ κατοικεῖν ὁ Θεὸς λέγεται).

540. Gk. ὥστε τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ φῶς ἐνταυθοῖ καὶ σκότος. And see esp. St. Dionysius, *ibid.*: "the dark cloud is the unapproachable light" (γνόφον εἰπὼν εἶναι τὸ ἀπρόσιτον φῶς; and also St. Gregory's *In Defence of the Holy Hesychasts* II. iii. 51, where St. Gregory, using very similar language, again refers to St. Dionysius.

541. St. John Damascene, *Homily on the Transfiguration of Our Saviour Jesus Christ* 2 (PG 96:545B).

542. Gk. ἐν τούτῳ… γίνεται πᾶς ὁ Θεὸν γνῶναι καὶ ἰδεῖν ἀξιούμενος, St. Dionysius, *Letter* V, *loc. cit.*

543. See Hom. XV, 5, n. 201.

544. The view that it was the light which startled the three disciples at the transfiguration is indeed one which is held by most ecclesiastical writers who have treated the subject, but *cf.* Clement of Alexandria, who identifies the voice as the most startling element in the vision, *Excerpts from the Writings of Theodotus* V, 1: "for the sense of hearing is less trustworthy than the sense of sight, and so a strange voice is more likely to frighten" (ὅτι ὦτα τυγχάνει ἀπιστότερα ὀφθαλμῶν, καὶ ἡ παρὰ δόξαν φωνὴ μᾶλλον ἐκπλήσσει).

545. St. Gregory is referring here to an "about-turn" in the contentions of his theological adversaries. In the earlier stages of the Hesychast Controversy (1337 – 1351), that is, in his disputations with Barlaam the Calabrian, which culminated in the first of the three councils at Constantinople, in 1341, the anti-Hesychast camp maintained that the divine and supranatural light of Christ is both sensible and created; whereas later, upon being persuaded by the arguments of their opponents as to the uncreatedness of the light of Christ, they began to insist on identifying the divine light with the very essence of God (*cf.* Hom. VIII, 10–13, nn. 100–103, and Hom. XI, 12, nn. 149–151). In this, St. Gregory's adversaries were following what may be described as a philosophical and "essentialist" line of thought, which also happens to be the general perspective adopted by the post-Augustinian tradition in the west (see Hom. XI, 12, n. 149). Based on a rigorist dialectical focus on the simplicity of God, those who espoused the essentialist perspective were led to the conclusion that anything that is not identifiable with the divine essence cannot be identified with God *Himself*, and thus must be created. Conversely, anything that is uncreated, and therefore identifiable with God's very Being, must refer to His essence, since in God there can be nothing other than essence or substance (*cf.* St. Augustine of Hippo, *e.g.* in his *On the Trinity* IX. i, 8, and *De Fide et Symbolo* 19). Therefore, for Palamas' theological opponents, either the light of Tabor is not a revelation of the divine essence, and is therefore created, or if it is uncreated, and therefore a manifestation of God Himself, then it must be a revelation of the divine essence.

546. See the Paraphrase of St. Macarius of Egypt's *Homilies* by St. Symeon Metaphrastes (*fl. c.* 960), *On the Freedom of the Mind* 21 (PG 34:956AC); *cf. The Philokalia,* vol. 3 (Athens, 1976), § 137, p. 229; Eng. trans., *op. cit.* (1984), p. 347, which refers to the "immortal glory *of the Spirit*".

547. Eunomius of Cyzicus (d. 394), *Confession of Faith* 3, in R. P. Vaggione, ed. and trans., *Eunomius: The Extant Works* (Oxford, 1987), 152.

548. From St. Gregory of Nyssa's, *Refutation of Eunomius' Confession of Faith* 120, *vulgo, Against Eunomius* II (PG 45:521A).

549. Gk. λαμπρότης.

550. Eutyches (*c.* 378 – 454) and Dioscorus (d. 454): the leaders of the Monophysites or "Non-Chalcedonians", those who rejected the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the Fourth Ecumenical Council.

551. *Cf.* St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration* XXVIII, 19: "But neither those whom we have just mentioned, nor any one else belonging to their ranks [*viz.* of the prophets and saints] has either stood in the substance and essence of the Lord (ἐν ὑποστήματι καὶ οὐσίᾳ Κυρίου), as the Scripture says (*cf.* Jer. 23:18 Lxx), or seen or declared the nature of God (οὐδὲ Θεοῦ φύσιν ἢ εἶδεν ἢ ἐξηγόρευσεν)"; and see *e.g.* nn. 37–38 (Hom. IV, 3), 103 (Hom. VIII, 13), 150–151 (Hom. XI, 12), 193 (Hom. XIV, 1), 515 and 523 (Hom. XXXIV, 3 and 10), above, and 879 (Hom. LIII, 52) below.

552. Gk. ἀμερίστως μεριζόμενον, *undividedly divided.* See Hom. VIII, 10, n. 101, Hom. XX, 11, n. 299, Hom. XXIV, 8, n. 374, and Hom. XXXIII, 11, n. 508. In other words, with the manifestation of the divinity or Godhead to each person we are faced with the paradox that the whole divinity is present, without suffering diminution in any way; see *Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetic Life: One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* 68; Eng. trans. in *The Philokalia, op. cit.*, vol. 4 (1995), pp. 377–378.

553. Gk. μερίζεται ἀμερίστως, and see n. 552 above.

554. It was customary in St. Gregory's time to refer to contemporary peoples and heresies by ancient names, thereby implying a certain similarity and continuity between them. Thus, St. Gregory is actually referring here to the Bogomils of the fourteenth century (see Hom. VIII, 13, n. 103), and not to the Messalians *per se* (also known as the Euchites, "praying people"), of the fourth to seventh centuries. St. Gregory's comparison is justified, however, inasmuch as both groups believed in the attainability of the vision of God's essence.

HOMILY THIRTY-SIX

555. The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, Matt. 18:23–35.

556. Gk. ἀνεξικακία, also *forbearance, long-suffering, patient endurance* (Lampe, *s.v.*).

557. Gk. συμπάθεια.

558. See esp. Hom. XXXII, 3, n. 331.

559. Of the existence of different kinds of angels, testimony is to be found both in Scripture (the seraphim in Isa. 6:2; cherubim in Ezek. 1:5; principalities or rulers, authorities or virtues, powers, and dominions in Eph. 1:21; and thrones in Col. 1:16, which also mentions dominions, principalities and authorities), and in tradition (see St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* 38, who, following Eph. 1:21 and Col. 1:16, enumerates five ranks of angels, and adds the phrase, "and as many spiritual natures as exist, which have not been named"; St. Irenaeus

of Lyons, in his *Against the Heresies* II, 30, 6, added angels and archangels to the five ranks found in Eph. 1:21 and Col. 1:26, making them seven; St. Gregory the Theologian, in his *Oration on Theology* XXVIII, 31, refers to eight orders: angels, archangels, principalities, authorities, brightnesses (λαμπρότητες), ascents (ἀναβάσεις), intellectual or spiritual powers (νοεραὶ δυνάμεις), and intelligences or *noës* (νόες); and both St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in *Catecheses* XXIII, 6, and St. John Chrysostom, in *On Genesis,* Hom. IV, 5, refer to nine ranks of angels; but it was only after St. Dionysius the Areopagite that the number and order of the angelic powers was fixed at the now familiar nine ranks of angels arranged hierarchically in three triads, namely: seraphim, cherubim, and thrones (σεραφίμ, χερουβίμ, θρόνοι); dominions, powers, and authorities (κυριότητες, δυνάμεις, ἐξουσίαι); principalities, archangels, and angels (ἀρχαί, ἀρχάγγελοι, ἄγγελοι); the last two of which have been appointed to serve man in a direct way, see his *Celestial Hierarchy* VI, 2, and *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* I, 2 (*cf.* Heb. 1:14).

Although Deut. 32:8 (Lxx) states that there are as many angels as there are peoples, other Scriptural passages suggest that every individual, or at least every believer, has been assigned a guardian angel (see Acts 12:15; and, ref. children, Matt. 18:10), *ODCC, s.v.* "Guardian Angel". And tradition has it that there are seven archangels (Tob. 12:15), and in early Christian apocryphal literature the Word of God appears either as the one around whom six archangels stand in attendance, or as the seventh and greatest of them, see *e.g. s.v.* "Anges", in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie,* F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, eds., vol. 1 (Paris, 1924), cols. 2085–2090; and also in J. Daniélou, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea,* vol. 1: *The Theology of Jewish Christianity,* trans. J. A. Baker (London and Philadelphia), pp. 121–123; though only three are identified by name in the Bible: Michael (Dan. 10:13ff and 12:1), Gabriel (Dan. 8:16ff; 9:21ff), and Raphael (Tob. 12:1–21); and the Jewish pseudepigraphical Book of Enoch (also known as the "Ethiopic Enoch", from *c.* 170 BC) gives us a fourth name, that of the archangel Uriel (see 1 Enoch 20 and *passim*), found in *ODCC, s.vv.* "angel", "archangel" and "Uriel". Another tradition speaks of Satan as a fallen archangel, as in *e.g.* St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* II, 4. See esp. Lampe, *s.vv.* ἄγγελος and ἀρχάγγελος; and *cf.* n. 560 below.

Notice once again that, as the crowning point of God's creation, it was for man's benefit that even the angelic powers were made, see Hom. III, 5, esp. n. 21.

560. The archangel Michael being the prime example of this in Dan. 10:13, 21; and 12:1, where he is depicted as leading Israel in battle against the Persians, who, in their turn, are led by the "prince of Persia" – apparently another angel; and thus a further indication that angels, since the time that God "separated the sons of Adam", had been set over each of the peoples of the earth (Deut. 32:8 Lxx). See *ODCC, s.vv.* "Michael the Archangel, St."; and *cf.* n. 559 above.

In the Book of Revelation, it may be added, there are also mentioned seven angels of the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (Rev. 1–3), *ODCC, s.v.* "Angels of the Churches".

561. Gk. ὑπὲρ τὸ πᾶν.

562. On the different kinds of "works of mercy" or "almsgiving" (ἐλεημοσύνη), see Hom. IV, 13, n. 42.

563. See Homs. XXVII, 7, and XXXIV, 3.

564. Note that the word "talent" (τάλαντον) can refer either to a *unit of weight*, which is the sense in which it is employed here, or to a *sum of money*, Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 424, n. 12.

565. Gk. τὸ σκληρὸν καὶ ἀνένδοτον τῆς ἡμετέρας γνώμης.

566. See Hom. XXIV, 16, n. 380, Hom. XXXVI, n. 476, and Hom. XXXVII, 20; and also Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, pp. 16–17, who maintains that this episode probably took place only a few months before this homily was delivered, once the Serbs, that is, had retreated from the areas surrounding Thessalonica.

HOMILY THIRTY-SEVEN

567. Like Hom. XXXVI, this homily was delivered at a time of threat of invasion and of internal strife (see n. 566 above; and Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 17). Hence, St. Gregory's supplication to the Mother of God in § 20 below: "Rescue us from the terrors that encompass us. See how many dangers of all kinds afflict us, from our own people and from strangers, from within and without. Through your power turn everything for the best. Bring mutual calm between fellow-citizens at home, and drive away those who attack like wild beasts from outside."

568. Note that all things in the divine economy have been accomplished in and through the *flesh* of the Son and Word of God (see Hom. XVI). That flesh, Christ's humanity, was conceived "of the Holy Ghost *and the Virgin Mary*" (Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople, 381), who, being "full of grace" (see Hom. XIV, 8, n. 196), having reached perfection (τελείωσις) or deification (θέωσις) at the tender age of three, was found worthy – and indeed freely agreed ("be it unto me according to thy word", Luke 1:38) – to become the living Holy of Holies of Him whom even the heavens cannot contain, see esp. Hom. LIII, 47 and *passim*. Hence, since the saving flesh of Christ is from that of His Most Holy Mother, St. Gregory is quite correct in making the seemingly bold statement that it is through her that "the saints receive their hallowing", that is to say, Christ Himself.

569. The Mother of God, even in her earliest childhood, had reached a point of perfection or union with God (see VII, 2 – VIII, 2 of the *Book of James*, otherwise

known as the *Protevangelium* – an apocryphal but orthodox work of the second century; Eng. trans. J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford, 1993, p. 60), which by far surpassed the pre-fallen, paradisaical state of Adam (see also n. 568 above). In this state, as St. Gregory indicates here, there is no question of falling away from God, the author of life, since, as the whole of one's being is turned entirely towards God, and thus is perfectly attuned to, and in harmony with, His divine will, there is no place for sin (and so also for death) to take hold. Hence, if Adam had progressed to the level of perfection displayed in the life of the all-pure Virgin, before his being tempted of the serpent, there would have been no fall.

570. That is to say, the Mother of God also died and was raised on the third day (see *The Discourse of Saint John the Divine on the Falling Asleep of the Holy Mother of God* 48, dated probably from the later 4th century; Eng. trans. Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 707–708; and St. John I Archbishop of Thessalonica, d. *c.* 630, *Homily on the Dormition of Our Lady Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary* I, in vol. XIX, Fascicule 3, No. 93 of the *Patrologia Orientalis,* Paris, 1926, pp. 375–405, which, as M. R. James informs us, is based on the aforementioned *Discourse of Saint John* (see *The Apocryphal New Testament,* Oxford, 1989 repr. ed., p. 194), and which is in all probability St. Gregory's immediate source on the traditions associated with the Dormition of the Mother of God, of which it is, excluding the apocryphal narratives themselves, the earliest detailed account). Furthermore, the death of the Ever-Virgin, like that of her Son before her, was, as St. Maximus the Confessor puts it, "by economy" (κατ᾽ οἰκονομίαν), and therefore voluntary (*Letters to Thalassius* LXI, PG 90: 625–645). And the same applies to the death of all the righteous in Christ, see Hom. XII, 2, n. 166; esp. Hom. XVI, 32, n. 224, and Hom. XXI, 5, n. 315; and also nn. 248–249 above.

571. See *Book of James* (*Protevangelium*) VIII, 2 – XII, 2; Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 60–62.

572. Gk. ἐνυπόστατος. See Hom. VIII, 8, n. 94.

573. Gk. τοῦτο δὲ οὐκ ἐπισκίασις, ἀλλ᾽ ἕνωσις ἄντικρύς ἐστιν.

574. Gk. συναναστραφεῖς, from συναναστρέφω, see Hom. XXIV, 2, n. 366.

575. Just as Christ died, rose again on the third day, and ascended into heaven to the right hand of God the Father, so also with His all-pure Mother (*cf. The Discourse of Saint John the Divine on the Falling Asleep of the Holy Mother of God* 37–50; Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 706–708; St. John of Thessalonica, *Homily on the Dormition of Our Lady Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary* I, 14, *op. cit.*, pp. 401–402; and n. 256 below); the difference being, of course, that she is a glorified and perfected created human person or hypostasis, whereas Christ, as the uncreated, second person or hypostasis of the Holy Trinity, who voluntarily assumed and glorified human nature in Himself, is Himself the natural source of all sanctification.

576. *The Discourse of Saint John the Divine on the Falling Asleep of the Holy Mother of God* 25–26, and esp. 50; Eng. trans. Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 704 and 708.

respectively; and St. John of Thessalonica, *Homily on the Dormition of Our Lady Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary* I, 5–8, pp. 381–389.

577. Gk. καὶ ὁ θάνατος αὐτῆς ζωηφόρος. Everything that is true of Christ *by nature* is also true of His Most Holy Mother *by grace* (see *e.g.* Hom. LIII, 12). Therefore, even the death and translation, that is, resurrection, of her most-holy body – in which Christ the God-man was conceived and formed – is, by grace, *life-giving*; inasmuch as she alone, of all the saints, *even now*, shares fully (in both soul *and body*), in the life of the Most Holy Trinity, which is in fact the future hope of all the saints (see § 8 below). In this sense, then, the all-pure Virgin also participates fully *in every aspect of God's saving work*; for as the *only* human person or hypostasis hitherto perfectly united through her Son to the Holy Trinity, she not only intercedes for us unceasingly, but also *saves* all those who honour her in and through the life-giving flesh of her Son and our God. *Cf.* Hom. XIV, 15, and Hom. LIII, 10, 12–14, 17, 61, and *passim*.

578. See *The Discourse of Saint John the Divine on the Falling Asleep of the Holy Mother of God* 29–34; and also the case of Jephonias, 46–47; Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 704–705 and 707, respectively; and St. John of Thessalonica, *Homily on the Dormition of Our Lady Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary* I, 13, *op. cit.*, pp. 398–401.

579. *The Discourse of Saint John the Divine on the Falling Asleep of the Holy Mother of God* 38–44, and 48–50; Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 706–707, and 707–708, respectively; and St. John of Thessalonica, *Homily on the Dormition of Our Lady Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary* I, 13, *op. cit.*, pp. 398 and 397ff.

580. Gk. μετανέστη σήμερον.

581. See the *Book of James* (*Protevangelium*) VII, 2 – VIII, 2; Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

582. Gk. αἱ σινδόνες καὶ τὰ ἐντάφια. For *linen cloths* (σινδόνες), see St. John of Thessalonica, *Homily on the Dormition of Our Lady Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary* I, 14, *op. cit.*, p. 401 (ηὕραμεν μόνας τὰς σινδόνας); and for *shrouds* or *winding-sheets* (ἐντάφια), *ibid.*, II, p. 437 (μόνα δὲ τὰ ἐντάφια εὑρόντες).

583. Christ remained with His disciples for a further forty days until His ascension (Acts 1:3–5), to prepare them for Pentecost.

584. See § 2 above.

585. Referring again to the one who shone forth from her, that is to say, Christ.

586. The Mother of God, like her Son, has also ascended to the right hand of God the Father, which means that she now enjoys equality with God – by grace (see nn. 575 and 577 above).

587. That is to say, by reason of the mother-and-child relationship.

588. See Hom. XXII, 4, n. 335.

Homily Thirty-Eight

589. As Professor Chrestou shows (in *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 17, referring to the phrase at the beginning of § 4, "we have just heard", ἠκούσαμεν ἀρτίως), this homily must have been delivered only moments after the recitation of the Gospel according to St. Matthew (Matt. 28:16–20), the First Matins Gospel: the Commissioning of the Disciples.

590. See also Hom. XIX, 13, n. 600.

591. In §§ 4–6 and 9–11, St. Gregory develops the Pauline theme of the providential character of the Jews' disobedience (Rom. 11:11–24, 30–32).

592. Gk. συμφυΐα and ὁμοτιμία; and *cf.* Hom. XXIV, 2, n. 365.

593. Gk. ὡς εἰπεῖν, lit. *so to say.*

594. *Cf.* St. Symeon the New Theologian, in *Ethical Orations* X, 448–470, who states categorically, that "Baptism is not sufficient for salvation" (found in Krivocheine, *In the Light of Christ, op. cit.*, pp. 109–110); and see Hom. LVII, 17.

595. See n. 55 above (Hom. V, 17).

596. Gk. τῇ πρὸς τοὺς πταίοντας ἀνεξικάκῳ προαιρέσει.

Homily Thirty-Nine

597. It is possible that St. Gregory is referring here to the Black Death, which ravaged Europe from 1347 to 1348, wiping out more than one third of its total population. If so, then this homily would have been delivered either at Constantinople or somewhere other than Thessalonica (see my "Introduction", *op. cit.*, p. xxv, n. 22; and Chrestou, *Gregory Palamas: The Complete Works,* vol. 9, no. 72 in the series *Greek Fathers of the Church* (Thessalonica, 1985), p. 10; and *cf. ibid.*, vol. 10, no. 76 (1985), p. 18).

598. St. Gregory omits the first half of verse 21: "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee . . .".

599. Notice that the revelation given initially to Moses was superior to the law, which he later delivered to the Israelites (see *e.g.* St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On Worship in Spirit and in Truth*). In other words, Moses had in fact received the fullness of revelation in Christ, that is to say, knowledge of the mystery of the divine economy according to the flesh of the pre-incarnate Son and Word of God. This thesis, moreover, is entirely consistent with the Patristic tradition in general, which regards Moses as a model of perfection "in Christ" (see esp. St. Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*). Hence, as St. Gregory says in this passage, it was because of the sins of the people that a lesser law was given through Moses.

600. See n. 595 above.

601. See n. 470 above.

602. See n. 559 above.

603. Gk. ὡς γὰρ ἡ μεγαλωσύνη σου, οὕτω καὶ τὸ ἔλεός σου, based on Ecclus. 2:18, and found in its present form, *inter alia,* in the Prayer of Forgiveness, towards the end of *The Sacrament of Holy Unction* or *Anointing* (εὐχέλαιον).

HOMILY FORTY

604. This homily was delivered on the feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, that is, on 29 August, while St. Gregory was still a monk on the Holy Mountain (see § 20, where he refers to "those of us who live as monks"); and most probably around 1337, St. Gregory's last year on Athos, in other words, very shortly after the outbreak of the Hesychast Controversy (see § 17, in which he rebukes "those who speak against the truth of godliness"); see Chrestou, *op. cit.,* vol. 10, no. 76 (1985), p. 19.

605. Gk. θεοφεγγῆ τινα καὶ ἑωσφόρον ἀστέρα. *Cf.* Origen, *Frag. 45 on John,* who likens St. John to the morning star (ἑωσφόρος), in comparing him with Christ, whom he likens to the sun (found in Lampe, *s.v.*).

606. *Viz.* the archangel Gabriel (see Luke 1:19).

607. See *e.g.* St. Methodius of Olympus (died 311), who, in his *On the Resurrection* I, 25, and esp. III, 16, argues, against Origen, that it is this very same material body, in its final and perfected state, that will become spiritual, inasmuch as it "will contain the full energy and communion of the Holy Spirit".

608. That is, Caesar Augustus (27 BC – AD 14).

609. Note that Mosaic law allowed a brother to marry his brother's widow only if the former union were a childless one. Hence the clause, "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, *and have no child*" (Deut. 25:5), which, of course, was the case with the seven brothers in the Synoptic Gospels, each of whom respectively took his childless brother's wife, "to raise up seed unto his brother" (Matt. 22:25ff, Mark 12:20ff, Luke 20:29ff).

610. As mentioned above (see n. 604), St. Gregory is referring here to the early stages of the Hesychast Controversy, and more specifically, to his first theological opponent, Barlaam the Calabrian, and his followers. For references to Barlaam and his teaching, see Homs. VIII, 10 and 13, nn. 100 and 103 respectively, Hom. XI, 12, n. 149, Hom. XVI, 19, n. 218; and Homs. XXXIV, 3, n. 195, and XXXV, 14, n. 225.

611. The name "John" (Heb. יְהוֹחָנָן, *yᵉhôchânân,* or יוֹחָנָן, *yôchânân,* Gk. Ἰω(χ)ανάν, also Ἰωνάν, Ἰωαχάς, NT Ἰωανάν, Ἰωάννης), lit. *Yahweh makes grace,* hence *grace of*

God, from יהוה ("Yahweh", Gk. ὁ Ὤν, lit. *He Who Is,* AV, "I AM", see Exod. 3:14); and חן (*chēn*), lit. *charm, favour* or *grace.* See Origen, *Commentary on John* II, 33, and his *Homily IX on Luke*; and St. Sophronius of Jerusalem (*c.* 560 – 638), *Encomium for Saint John the Baptist* IV, 15 and 16 (refs. found in Lampe, *s.v.* Ἰωάννης).

612. Gk. εὐσέβεια, lit. *devotion, piety, or religion*; and Gk. ἀρετή, *virtue.* On virtue, see also Hom. VI, 2, and XXXII, 3, n. 157.

613. By referring to St. John the Baptist's death as being for the sake of virtue, St. Gregory is pointing to the spirit of martyrdom which is characteristic of the life of each and every Christian, and which is especially evident in the monastic way of life. Hence, just as it is a noble and courageous thing to be ready and willing to die for the faith in Christ, so is it even more blessed and laudable to be prepared to give up one's life before committing a sin (that is, before giving in to any of the passions), and to combat such impulses through ascetic struggle, the tireless practice and cultivation of virtue. See also Hom. XI, 17–18; and *cf.* Homs. II, 20, n. 16, XII, 2, n. 166, XVI, 32, n. 224, XXI, 5, n. 315, XXVIII, 12, n. 430, and XLVII, 13.

614. See above § 20, and n. 604.

615. Gk. ἀπαθεῖς, lit. *passionless*; and *cf.* Hom. X, 3, n. 123.

616. Gk. ἀδιαλείπτου προσευχῆς τοῦτο δεῖγμα.

617. On unceasing prayer, see esp. Homs. II, 13, n. 10, and LIII, 57–60.

618. Gk. ἀκτημοσύνης τε καὶ ἐγκρατείας.

619. The death of the saints is "by economy", that is to say, in imitation of Christ's innocent and voluntary death, see St. Maximus the Confessor, *Letters to Thalassius* LXI; and esp. Homs. XII, 2, n. 166, and XXI, 4 and 5, nn. 314 and 316.

HOMILY FORTY-ONE

620. The Parable of the Marriage Feast, as in Matt. 22:2–14.

621. What follows is a brilliant refutation, before John Calvin (1509 – 1564) and Theodore Beza (1519 – 1605), of Predestinarianism.

622. Gk. τὸν ἀπερινόητον.

623. Gk. τῷ λογικῷ τῆς καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς ψυχῆς.

624. Gk. τοῦ ἀπειράκις ἀπείρως ὑπερέχοντος ἡμῶν Θεοῦ.

625. Gk. τὸ προαιρετικὸν, *the innate ability to choose freely,* see Hom. II, 15, n. 14. and *cf.* Hom. XXV, 2, n. 385.

626. Gk. τὸ αὐτεξούσιον, *free will, freedom, the power of self-governance,* see n. 39 (Hom. IV, 8).

627. Gk. προαίρεσις, see n. 625 above.

628. Gk. αὐτεξούσιος, see n. 626 above, and n. 39 (Hom. IV, 8).

629. See nn. 626 and 628 above, and n. 39 (Hom. IV, 8).

630. See *e.g.* Homs. III, 5, n. 21, VI, 10, n. 66, XVII, 2, n. 234, and XXVI, 1, n. 395.

631. See nn. 626 and 628 above, and n. 39 (Hom. IV, 8).

632. Gk. οὐχ ἕνα γάμον, ἀλλὰ γάμους φησί.

633. Gk. τῶν ἱερῶν συνάξεων ἀπολειπόμενοι, lit. *those who are absent from sacred gatherings.*

634. In AD 70, and again in AD 135 (*cf.* Luke 21:20–24).

635. Gk. ἐγκρατείας καὶ ἁγνείας καὶ σωφροσύνης.

HOMILY FORTY-TWO

636. This homily was delivered during the vigil for the feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos (8 September), perhaps in 1352, at the Basilikon convent in Thessalonica, which was dedicated to the same feast. See my "Introduction", p. xxvi, nn. 23–24.

637. Since 46 BC, in the time of Julius Caesar (*c.* 100 – 44 BC), 1 September marked the beginning of the secular year, first at Antioch, and gradually throughout the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. To this day, moreover, 1 September continues to signal the commencement of the ecclesiastical year of the Orthodox Church, and since 1989, under the auspices of the Ecumenical Patriarch, His All-Holiness Demetrius I, has been designated as A Day of Prayer for the Protection of the Environment, with full Vespers and Matins, written by Monk Gerasimus (1905 – 1991) of the Smaller Skete of St. Anne, Mount Athos.

638. For the liturgical "today", see n. 310 above (Hom. XXI, 2).

639. See the *Book of James* (*Protevangelium*) I, 4 – IV, 1; Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 57–58; and James, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–41, which, *inter alia*, gives us the earliest witness to the names of the Ever-Virgin's parents, Joachim and Anna.

640. St. Gregory is addressing the nuns of the βασιλικόν convent in Thessalonica (see n. 316 above), and is referring here specifically to women who have either lost their husbands, that is, who are widows, or who have reached a mutual agreement with their spouses to separate, in order to end their days in the monastic way of life (see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 595, n. 13). *Cf.* also, Hom. V, 13, n. 52.

641. A fellow-servant, that is, of Christ the eternal King.

642. "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

643. "For he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."

644. Having reached the highest state of perfection, and thus also of incorruption, the Theotokos gave birth to Christ, the Son and Word of God in the flesh, without suffering any change whatsoever (see also Hom. XIV, 8, n. 197). Hence, she gave birth to Christ painlessly, and after thus giving birth remained virgin.

HOMILY FORTY-THREE

645. Matt. 15:21–28.

646. Gk. εὐτέλεια, also translated as *low estate* or *inferiority*.

647. Gk. κυνάριον (diminutive of κύων, *dog*) means *little dog, puppy,* but can also carry the signification of *the lowest* or *least of dogs,* which is the uppermost sense in Matt. 15:26–27.

648. Gk. μετ᾽ ἐπιτεταγμένης αὐτομεμψίας, which may also be translated as *with emphatic self-accusation* or even *self-hatred.* For more on αὐτομεμψία see n. 430 above, Hom. XXVIII, 12.

649. Maximus believed that without the fall, human reproduction would have continued in a different manner, see esp. n. 194 above (Hom. XIV, 5).

650. Gk. ἀνεύθυνος, also *guiltless, innocent.*

651. Gk. νυκτερινή τέ ἐστι καὶ δούλη καὶ ἐμπαθής, in St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration on Holy Baptism* XL, 2, where he speaks of three kinds of birth: our bodily birth, our birth through baptism, and that birth which is given through the resurrection.

652. Compare the view of the pre-Socratic Milesian philosopher, Anaximander (*c.* 610 – *c.* 540 BC), who is reported to have said, "That originally humans were born from animals of a different kind, because the other animals can soon look after themselves while humans alone require a long period of nursing; that is why if they had been like this originally they would not have survived." This doxography is given by Plutarch (AD *c.* 46 – *c.* 120) in his *Miscellanies* fragment 179.2, preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea, *Preparation for the Gospel* I vii 16; trans. J. Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London, 1987), p. 73.

653. Gk. νοῦν καθηγεμόνα καὶ αὐτοκράτορα.

654. Gk. ἐτιμήθημεν λόγῳ.

655. Gk. τοῖς ὀφείλουσιν ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ σωφρονίζεσθαι.

656. Gk. τὸ τῆς ἀλόγου ψυχῆς παθητικόν, *the passive aspect of the irrational soul.* That aspect of the soul which is liable to the passions and emotions. In classical times, Aristotle had spoken of the expediency of *the rational element* of the mind ruling over *the passionate* or *passive element* (τὸ παθητικὸν μόριον [*sc.* τῆς ψυχῆς]) in the context of his discussion about rulers and subjects in the *Polis*, the Greek city-state, see *Politics* I, 5 (1254^b 6); and compare the entirely different context of his *On the Soul* III, 5 (430^a 17–26), where *the passive mind* (νοῦς παθητικός), the recepticle of all images or impressions in the soul, is contrasted with the immortal and eternal *active mind* (νοῦς ποιητικός, see n. 32 above). Aristotle's younger colleague, Theophrastus (*c.* 371 – *c.* 287 BC), had identified *the passive mind* as that element in animals that is liable to πάθη, *Enquiry into Plants* (*De Causis Plantarum*) I, 22.3; and Zeno of Citium in Cyprus (334 – 262 BC), the founder of Stoic philosophy, also spoke of *the imaginative and passive faculty of the soul* (τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ φανταστικὸν καὶ παθητικόν), *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* I, 56, edited by H. von Arnim (Stuttgart, 1964: reprint ed.).

But Palamas' most likely immediate source would have been St. John Damascene, who, in his *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 12, explains that the term was used to refer to that aspect of the unreasonable soul which is capable of listening to and obeying reason (τὸ κατήκοον καὶ ἐπιπειθὲς λόγω), and which, with God's help, is able to educate, teach self-control to, or calm (see n. 657 below) the impulses of *anger* (θυμός) and *desire* (ἐπιθυμία).

Among other ecclesiastical writers are Origen, who maintained that the *practical* or *active life* (see nn. 137 and 183 above) is a "spiritual teaching", as it cleanses or purifies the passive part of the soul (ἥ γε πρακτική ἐστι διδασκαλία πνευματική, τὸ παθητικὸν μέρος τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκκαθαίρουσα), *On Psalms* II, 12 (J. B. Pitra, *Analecta Sacra*, 1–5, Paris, 1876–82, p. 449), see also Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Sermon I (PG 44:776C); Maximus the Confessor also referred to τοῦ παθητικοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς μέρους, *Ambigua* (PG 91:1196A), which is capable of sense-experience, *Ambigua* (1116A), and as Abba Thalassius (seventh century) asserts, in his *Centuries on Love and Self-Control and on the Governance of the Mind* I, 94 (PG 91:1436D): "The mind, through prayer, continues in God, and delivers the passive faculty of the soul from the passions" (νοῦς διὰ προσευχῆς τῷ Θεῷ ἐγχρονίζων, καὶ τὸ παθητικὸν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπαλλάττει), see also II, 49 (1441D).

657. Gk. καὶ τῶν ἐντεῦθεν ὁρμῶν τὰς μὲν ἐσόφισαν, τὰς δὲ ἐσωφρόνισαν, τὰς δὲ ἐξημέρωσαν.

658. Gk. καὶ τῶν ἀτίμων ἀτιμότερος καὶ τῶν ἀλόγων ἀλογώτερος γίνεται.

HOMILY FORTY-FOUR

659. Celebrated on 26 September.

660. Gk. μυστικῶς.

661. The names of the twelve apostles are: (1) Simon Peter, (2) Andrew, (3) James and (4) John, (5) Philip, (6) Bartholomew, (7) Thomas, (8) Matthew, (9) James the son of Alphaeus, (10) Thaddaeus or, according to Luke (see Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13) Judas the son of James, (11) Simon the Zealot or Cananaean, and (12) Judas Iscariot. The place of Judas Iscariot was later taken by Matthias (Acts 1:26); but see n. 662 following.

662. St. Gregory is referring to the fact that, theologically speaking, the twelfth place among the apostles was taken by St. Paul, even though it was formally given to Matthias (Acts 1:15–26). Furthermore, it is clear from Scripture that St. Paul did not hesitate to apply the title "apostle" (Gk. ἀποστέλλω, *I send*) to himself, as one sent by the Risen Christ to preach the Good News (Rom.1:1, Gal. 1:1, etc.), and also to others (Rom. 16:7), including St. James the Brother of the Lord (Gal. 1:19).

663. Gk. παρθένος.

664. Gk. ψυχῆς δὲ ἀκριβὴς παρθενία ἡ πρὸς πᾶσαν κακίαν ἀσυνδύαστος γνώμη.

665. Titus Flavius Domitian, Roman Emperor from AD 81 – 96. For testimonies to his cruelty in persecuting the early Christians, see *1 Clement* 7, and Eusebius of Caesarea, *History of the Church* III, 13ff.

666. *Cf.* St. Silouan's description of the man united to God in love, forgetting the world, and being completely detached from it, in *e.g. Saint Silouan the Athonite, op. cit.*, pp. 327–328.

667. Gk. ἐν κατανύξει καὶ ὀδύνῃ γλυκερᾷ καρδίας. *Cf.* Step 7, "On Joy-making Mourning" (χαροποιὸν πένθος), in St. John Climacus' *The Ladder of Divine Ascent, op. cit.*, p. 70 ff.

668. See Elder Sophrony's discussion of "Love for Enemies" in *Saint Silouan the Athonite, op. cit.*, pp. 114–117; elsewhere described by him as "hypostatic" or "personal prayer" for the world, the highest form of which is "Liturgical prayer", *e.g.* see *On Prayer, op. cit.*, p. 56; *cf. His Life is Mine, op. cit.*, pp. 87–89; *We Shall See Him, op. cit.*, p. 216; and also Archimandrite Zacharias, *The Enlargement of the Heart: "Be ye also enlarged" (2 Cor. 6:13) in the Theology of Saint Silouan the Athonite and Elder Sophrony of Essex* (Dalton, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2nd ed., 2012), pp. 124–126, 150, and 189.

669. The highest criterion of perfection in the Christian life is prayer for one's enemies, *Saint Silouan the Athonite, op. cit.*, pp. 352, 362–363; and see Hom. XLIV, 21, n. 761.

670. *Fontum non inveni.*

HOMILY FORTY-FIVE

671. The Gospel pericope is Luke 6:31–36.

672. The AV reads: "For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land."

673. As this paragraph shows, St. Gregory's use of the word "innate" (ἔμφυτος) is based on Jas. 1:21, "the implanted" or, as the AV reads, "engrafted word" (τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον), and does not seem to be employed in any technical sense. Also significant in this regard, perhaps, is the fact that, in this instance, ἔμφυτος is not used in conjunction with "law" (νόμος); but *cf.* Hom. III, 7, where Palamas does speak explicitly of an "innate" or "natural law" (ἔμουτος νόμος), which he identifies with the conscience (συνείδησις), and which is man's God-given ability to discern between right and wrong. See esp. Hom. III, 7 and 8, nn. 24 and 27 above; and *cf.* Hom. XLVII, 7, n. 712 below.

674. Gk. διδοὺς νόμους μου εἰς διάνοιαν αὐτῶν. The Lxx places the verses referred to here at Jer. 38:31, 33, of which St. Gregory's quotation is in fact verbatim.

675. Gk. τὸ γνωμικῶς θέλειν, lit. *will by deliberation* (*cf.* esp. n. 331 above).

676. Once again, St. Gregory refers to the Zealots, who ruled the city of Thessalonica between the years 1342 to 1349, and caused such political and religious unrest, see also nn. 1 and 376 above.

677. Although by no means a theocracy, the people of the Christian Roman Empire (Byzantium), like St. Gregory himself, believed that those who ruled over the state did so by the grace and permission of God, in accordance with St. Paul's words in Rom. 13:1–2: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

678. Gk. καὶ τούτων ἄνευ μηδὲ προφαίνεσθαι συγχωροῦντες τὸν κῆνσον καὶ τὸ ἀργύριον.

679. Although Deut. 23:20 appears to allow a loophole for lending at interest to a stranger ("Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury"), traditionally, *usury* (τοκοληψια, lit. *the taking of interest*) was discouraged and forbidden by the Church, see e.g. the Scriptural refs. in §§ 7 and 8 of this homily, St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Oration on the Catholic and Apostolic Faith* 24 (PG 42:832A), and *Canon 17* of the First Ecumenical Council (Nicaea 325). In the fourteenth century, moreover, St. Nicholas Cabasilas, a contemporary of Palamas, in his *On Usury* (PG 150:727–750), wrote against lending for profit, expressing the sentiments of both his period and the Patristic tradition in general.

Homily Forty-Six

680. The Gospel pericope is Luke 7:11–16.

681. Gk. αἰῶνες, *aeons, ages* or *worlds*, pl. form of αἰών (Heb. עוֹלָם, *'ôlâm*). The *ages* were the very first of God's creation, see n. 322 above.

682. *Ibid.*

683. Gk. τὴν μέλλουσαν παγκοσμίαν ἀνάστασιν.

684. Gk. πρόγραμμα, lit. *example, prescription.*

685. For prayer as an act proper only to human nature, see n. 41 above.

686. Gk. αὐτόκλητος, lit. *self-invited.*

687. Gk. τὸ πάθος, lit. *the passion.*

688. Gk. τῇ διὰ σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ.

689. By virtue of the "hypostatic union" and the "exchange of natural properties" (*communicatio idiomatum*), the human nature assumed by the Son and Word of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, is "one with God" (ὁμόθεον), and thus possesses all the characteristics (ἰδιώματα, *idiomata*) proper to Christ's divine nature, which is the very same nature or essence of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, whatever is true of Christ in His divinity is also true of Him in His humanity. Hence, Christ's human body is *life-giving*, not only as that through which the divine life is bestowed upon the saints, but also as that through which the divine life originates: Christ's human body is the very source of the divine life. See esp. nn. 41 and 208 above.

690. Gk. ἤκουσε γὰρ ὁ κωφὸς χοῦς τοῦ καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα, that is to say, *that which was bereft of life heard Him calling it back to life again.*

691. Gk. κατὰ φαντασίαν, *in appearance only, illusory.*

692. Jairus' daughter.

693. Gk. θεοπρεπέστατον, lit. *most befitting God,* Sup. of θεοπρεπής, *befitting God, worthy of God.*

694. Gk. ἣ πρόξενος ἐστι τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς.

695. Gk. χάλκεια χρυσέων, a reference to Homer's χρύσεα χαλκείων, ἑκατόμβοι' ἐννεαβοίων, *golden armour for bronze, one hundred oxen's worth for the value of nine,* the gift that Glaucas made to Diomedes, in honour of their grandfathers' friendship, in *The Iliad,* VII, 236.

696. St. Gregory is referring here to the *natural state* (κατὰ φύσιν), in which Adam was created, and which, although not yet perfect (not yet Christlike in every way), was one full of virtue. See esp. n. 209, but also nn. 212 and 214 above.

697. Gk. τὸ πρὸς ἀλλήλους συγγνωμονικόν τε καὶ κοινωνικὸν καὶ φιλάνθρωπον.

698. Gk. μέτρῳ καλῷ καὶ πεπιεσμένῳ τῆς πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς εὐποιίας.

699. Gk. ἔργου καὶ λόγου καὶ νοῦ παντὸς ἀσυγκρίτως ὑψηλοτέραν.

700. The forefeast for St. Demetrius the Greatmartyr (3rd century), the patron saint of Thessalonica, would begin, in Palamas' time, on the second Sunday before the feast itself, 26 October, see P. Chrestou, ed., *Gregory Palamas: The Complete Works*, vol. 11, in the series *Greek Fathers of the Church* 79, Thessalonica, 1986, p. 105, n. 32 [in Greek].

It is perhaps fair to say that no other saint in the history of Christendom has enjoyed such liturgical prominence as Demetrius of Thessalonica. The manuscript tradition bears witness to an elaborate celebration of his feast, which peaked around the time of St. Symeon of Thessalonica (d. 1429). Characterized by a period of fasting (from 1 October), a "holy week" of services, after the pattern of the pre-Paschal Holy Week, commemorating the Lord's passion, as well as an afterfeast of eight days (Octave); the general idea was, of course, that in their death the martyrs became imitators and sharers in the passion of Christ. More specifically, however, in the case of Demetrius' martyrdom, his death by a spear (as the surviving hymnography shows) was likened to the piercing of Christ's side (John 19:34), and the parallel is further emphasized in that his body, like that of Christ (*cf.* Ps. 16:10, Acts 2:31; 13:35), not only remained incorrupt, but also gave forth healing myrrh from his mortal wound. This remarkable and unique liturgical treasure fell into disuse, however, with the fall of Thessalonica to the Turks in 1430, although something of a revival has taken place in recent times, see I. M. Fountoulis, *"Great Week" for Saint Demetrius*, in the series *Liturgical Texts* 17, Thessalonica, 1979, pp. 6–11 [in Greek]; and also his *Reasonable Worship, op. cit.*, pp. 271–273 [in Greek].

701. Gk. πρόγραμμα καὶ τύπος καὶ σύμβολόν ἐστι.

702. Gk. περὶ αὐτό, lit. *around* or *surrounding it*; referring to the divine glory by which the human body will be enveloped in the age to come.

703. Gk. πάντως ἄρρητόν τε καὶ ἀνεννόητον.

704. Gk. τοῦ ἐν μάρτυσι μυροχεύμονος.

HOMILY FORTY-SEVEN

705. The Gospel pericope Luke 8:5–15.

706. Gk. ῥαθυμία, *apathy, laxity, laziness*, see n. 6 above.

707. On Christ refered to as Father, see nn. 2 and 163 above.

708. Also from the closing prayer of the *Service of the First Hour.*

709. See n. 706 above.

710. Gk. κρίμασιν οἷς ὁ Κύριος οἶδε.

711. St. Gregory is here referring to the importance of the correct spiritual disposition of the one seeking to discover the will of God, see Hom. XVII, 2, n. 233, and Hom. XXVII, 1, n 413 above; n. 430, and *cf.* nn. 32 and 60.

712. Gk. τοῦ ἐν τῇ κτίσει τῆς φύσεως νόμου, and see ἔμφυτος νόμος, Hom. III, 7 and 8, nn. 24 and 27 above, and *cf.* ἔμφυτος, Hom. XLV, 2, n. 673.

713. Gk. καὶ διὰ τοῦ γραπτῶς τοῖς Ἰσραηλίταις διδομένου νόμου καὶ διὰ τοῦ προφητικοῦ λόγου, see "the written law" (γραπτὸς νόμος), Hom. III, 8, and n. 27 above.

714. Gk. καὶ διὰ τοῦ προφητικοῦ λόγου, by which St. Gregory refers to the distinction between the law of Moses (γραπτὸς νόμος) and the writings of the Old Testament prophets, "word of the prophets" (προφητικὸς λόγος), see also Hom. III, 8, and n. 27 above.

715. Gk. καὶ διὰ τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου τῆς χάριτος, see "the law of grace" (ὁ τῆς χάριτος νόμος), Hom. III, 8, and n. 27 above.

716. Gk. διὰ μικροψυχία καὶ πώρωσιν.

717. Gk. προαίρεσις, rendered here as *resolve,* see esp. nn. 14 (Hom. II, 15) and 625 (Hom. XLI, 5) above.

718. Gk. ψυχὴν . . . καλὴν καὶ ἀγαθὴν ἔχουσαν προαίρεσιν, see *ibid.*, and esp. n. 14 above.

719. Gk. μὴ πάροδον ἐῶσα ποιεῖσθαι διʼ αὐτῆς τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τῆς οἰκείας σωτηρίας.

720. Gk. τὸν χρηματιστικὸν καὶ ἀπολαυστικὸν καὶ διαρρέοντα βίον ἀπωσαμένη.

721. Gk. δουλείαν, μισθαρνίαν, υἱότητα. For earlier examples of this kind of categorization, see n. 425 above (Hom. XXVIII, 8).

722. Gk. ἀνυποταξίαν καὶ ἀπείθειαν, lit. *insubordination and non-compliance* (Lampe, *s.vv.*).

723. Gk. τῶν σωζομένων ἐκτός ἐστιν.

724. Gk. νοῦς ὁρᾷ καὶ νοῦς ἀκούει. Saying attributed to the pre-Socratic philosopher, Pythagoras (*c.* 550 – *c.* 500 BC), in Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* 46.

725. Gk. τὰς λογικὰς ἀρούρας ἀροτριᾶσαι.

726. Gk. αὐτομεμψία, *self-condemnation,* has the force of being ready to die for Christ and His gospel (*cf.* Mark 8:35); see esp. n. 430 above (Hom. XXVIII, 12), and Hom. XLIX, 9–10 below.

727. The word used here is “Gehenna” (Gk. γέεννα, Heb. גֵּי הִנֹּם, *gê Hinnôm*), see esp. n. 46 above (Hom. IV, 25).

728. Gk. τῆς ἀργολογίας, τῆς λοιδορίας, τῆς καταλαλιᾶς.

729. Gk. βαττολογία, lit. *stammering, unintelligent speech, babbling* (*cf.* Lampe, *s.v.*).

730. Gk. διὸ καὶ εἰσὶν οἳ πτερόεντας τοὺς λόγους ἔφησαν, a reference to Homer’s ἔπεα πτερόεντα, *winged words*, in *The Iliad*, I, 201.

731. *Cf.* 1 Cor. 7:31: καὶ οἱ χρώμενοι τὸν κόσμον ὡς μὴ καταχρώμενοι; for which the AV reads: *And they that use this world, as not abusing it.*

732. The celebrations of St. Demetrius’ memory had already begun, both liturgically (in the form of a two week forefeast) and in terms of popular festivities, see n. 700 above (Hom. XLVI, 11).

733. Gk. πρεσβείαις τοῦ ἡμεδαποῦ πολιούχου καὶ χριστομάρτυρος.

Homily Forty-Eight

734. The Gospel pericope Luke 16:19–31.

735. Gk. βιωφελῶς.

736. Gk. κοινωνικὸν ζῶόν ἐστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, lit. *man is a social* or *communal animal* or *man is an animal that lives in society* or *communion*. *Cf.* Aristotle’s definition of man as φύσει πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, lit. *man is political* or *sociable by nature*, in his *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 7 (1097^{b} 8–11), and similarly *man is by nature a political animal* (ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῶον), as in *Politics* I, 2 (1253^{a} 2–3) and also III, 6 (1278^{b} 19).

737. Gk. ἀδελφὸς οὐ λυτροῦται, λυτρώσεται ἄνθρωπος: The AV reads: *None of them can by any means redeem his brother.*

738. “Abraham” (Gk. Ἀβραάμ, from Heb. אַבְרָהָם, *’Abhrāhām*), the name given to *Abram* by God, to denote his becoming *a father of many nations* (Gen. 17:5).

739. Gk. διὰ τὴν φιληδονίαν καὶ τὴν ἀσπλαγχνίαν καὶ τὴν μισοξενίαν.

740. Gk. διὰ τὴν φιλοθεΐαν καὶ τὴν εὐσπλαγχνίαν καὶ τὴν φιλοξενίαν.

741. That is to say, ἀπέλαβες instead of ἔλαβες.

742. Gk. ἐπεὶ τὸν ἀπολαυστικὸν καὶ ἄνετον καὶ διαρρέοντα βίον τοῦ ἐγκρατοῦς προετίμησας, and *cf.* Hom. XLVII, 10, n. 720 above.

743. Gk. τὴν τοῦ Λαζάρου καρτερίαν μιμείσθωσαν.

744. See n. 700 (Hom. XLVI, 11), n. 732 (Hom. XLVII, 18) above; and esp. Hom. XLIX below.

HOMILY FORTY-NINE

745. The feastday for St. Demetrius of Thessalonica falls on 26 October. The three main sources for the *Life* of St. Demetrius are: the *Bibliotheca,* codex 255, of Photius the Great (*c.* 810 – *c.* 895), paralleled by an anonymous Greek account and a Latin translation by Anastasius Bibliothecarius (9th cent.) produced in 876; the anonymous Vaticanus graecus 821 (11th cent. MS); and that of Symeon Metaphrastes (*fl. c.* 960). It is in the latter version that Demetrius is depicted as inspiring St. Nestor; and it is in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople* where Nestor, in the arena, cries out, "God of Demetrius, help me!" (Ὁ Θεὸς Δημητρίου βοήθει μοι!), see n. 758 below, and *ODB, s.v.* "Demetrios of Thessalonike".

746. Gk. οἱ τῆς θεοπτίας ἐπώνυμοι (from θεοπτία, *vision of God,* and θεόπτης, *one who sees God*), as in *e.g.* Ἀβραάμ τὸν πατριάρχην, τὸν θεόπτην τὸν μέγαν, St. Gregory the Theologian, *On Virtue II*, from his *Ethical Poems* I, 2, 10 (PG 37:715A); Μωϋσῆς θεόπτης, in a work dubiously ascribed to St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, *Oration* V, *On the Veneration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross* (PG 87:3313A); and ὁ θεόπτης Ἡσαΐας, in a work wrongly attributed to St. Germanus of Constantinople, *Oration* I, *On the Veneration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross* (PG 98:241); found in Lampe, *s.v.* θεόπτης. See esp. Hom. XI, 12, n. 148, Hom. XXXIV, 10, n. 521, and Hom. LIII, 52, nn. 876–877.

747. Gk. ὁ αὐτόχθων ἡμῖν καὶ ἡμεδαπὸς πολιοῦχος, *cf.* n. 733 (Hom. XLVII, 19).

748. At the time in question, Thessaly referred to the administrative province which encompassed the area surrounding the city of Thessalonica, Western Macedonia, and Northern Thessaly (see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 168, n. 7).

749. The name "Thessalonica" (Gk. Θεσσαλονίκη, from Θετταλία or Θεσσαλία, *Thessaly,* and νίκη, *victory*), means "victory over the people of Thessaly" (*cf.* Chrestou, *ibid.*, p. 169, n. 8).

750. Note that Job 2:13 in the Lxx may also be rendered as refering to Job's "wound" (Gk. πληγή, Heb. כְּאֵב, *kᵉʾēbh, pain*); the AV reads: *for they saw that his* grief *was very great.*

751. By which St. Gregory refers to the Emperor Galerius (d. 311), whose full name is Caius Galerius Valerius Maximianus, son-in-law of Diocletian (245 – *c.* 316). Later on, he is referred to simply as Maximian (Chrestou, *ibid.*, p. 177, n. 27).

752. Possibly referring to the church dedicated to the Mother of God in the neighbourhood of the Coppersmiths (Gk. Παναγία χαλκέων, *Panagia Chalkeon* or *of the Coppersmiths*), see n. 757 below.

753. Gk. Καταφυγή.

754. "Egnatia Avenue" or "Way", which ran from Rome to Constantinople, and also passed through Thessalonica, was the longest road in antiquity.

755. Galerius Maximianus (see n. 751 above), not Maximianus Herculius (286 – c. 310), was the ruler of Thessalonica at that time (Chrestou, *ibid.*, p. 178, n. 28). Maximianus Herculius had been Diocletian's co-Emperor for nineteen years (286 – 305).

756. Lyaeus was Maximian's champion gladiator.

757. The procession would commence at the Refuge (Gk. Καταφυγή), advance to boulevard Egnatia, then go on to the basilica of the Virgin (better known as *Acheiropoietos*, "not made by hands"), where vespers were sung, and would conclude at the Church of St. Demetrius. The Refuge, it seems, is to be situated in the area around the Church of St. Mary of the Coppersmiths (Παναγία χαλκέων), see Chrestou, *ibid.*, pp. 180–181, n. 29, and n. 752 above.

758. The feast of the Holy Martyr Nestor falls on 27 October, the day following that of St. Demetrius, see also n. 745 above.

759. On the question of the voluntary nature of suffering and death in the saints, see also Homs. XII, 2, n. 166, XVI, 32, n. 224, XXI, 5, n. 316, XXXVII, 3, n. 570, and XL, 26, n. 619.

760. Gk. ἀλλὰ καὶ δοξάζει διηνεκῶς, lit. *but also glorifies continuously*.

761. On praying for one's enemies, see Homs. XLIV, 9, nn. 668 and 669 above.

HOMILY FIFTY

762. The Gospel pericope, Luke 8:27–39.

763. Those who blasphemed against Christ perceived only what He was doing on the physical plane, the level of the human senses. Though the physical healing, too, was a miracle, its value was a temporary one, while the healing of the paralysed man's soul had eternal significance. The importance of the physical healing, therefore, was that it represented something that was taking place on a much deeper level, the level of salvation.

764. That is to say, ἐξελθεῖν instead of ἐλθεῖν, lit. *he came out* [*from the lake*], as opposed to simply, *he came*.

765. Gk. συνεργεῖ . . . τὸ κακὸν τῷ ἀγαθῷ, προαιρέσει οὐ καλῇ. St. Macarius the Egyptian ("the Great"), *On the Guarding of the Heart* 12 (PG 34:833A); and *On Patience and Discernment* 6 (PG 34:869C).

766. The cause of demonic restlessness is the outright rejection of God's will. Because of their absolute rejection of God and His will, demons exist in a state of utter despair. Their desire to reject even the gift of their own existence, which means in effect that they wish to destroy anything and everything that reminds them of God, including themselves, is unattainable, since it is God's will not to take away that which He has given. *Cf.* St. John Damascene's "Concerning the Devil and Demons", in *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 4.

767. Gk. ἡμεῖς, οἱ μοναχοὶ μάλιστα. lit. *and indeed, we who are monks.*

768. Gk. φθείρουσι ἤθη χρηστὰ ὁμιλίαι γὰρ κακαί, from the *Thais* of Menander (Greek playwright, *c.* 342 – 292 BC), and quoted by St. Paul in 1 Cor. 15:33: the ascription of this popular proverb to Solomon is false, and probably derives from a marginal note in the manuscript tradition (Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 208, n. 16).

769. St. Gregory seems certain that the relics of St. Demetrius were still in his church at this time (Chrestou, *ibid.*, p. 210, n. 17), and that the myrrh could be seen flowing from them.

Homily Fifty-One

770. On the Gospel reading for the Seventh Sunday of Luke, 8:41–56: the raising of Jairus' daughter and the woman with an issue of blood. This homily, however, refers only briefly to Jairus' daughter (see § 14).

771. On man as the crowning point of God's creation, see Hom. III, 5, n. 21.

772. Gk. ὥσπερ ἀπόδοσίς τις καὶ ἀντίδοσις τὸ τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν.

773. Gk. τὸ τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν ἀνταπόδομα.

774. In plain and simple words, St. Gregory is here describing the supremely *eucharistic* character of the Christian life. Since God is the Creator and Bestower of every good thing, man can do nothing more than offer those things, which he has received from God's hand, back to Him with gratitude and "thanksgiving" (Gk. εὐχαριστία, *eucharist*), and this precisely is the significance of the *Anaphora* in the Divine Liturgy: "Thine own, of thine own, we offer unto thee in all and for all", *The Orthodox Liturgy, op. cit.*, p. 75. By so doing, not only is the ancestral usurpation corrected, but what is received is blessed and sanctified, so that its enjoyment is unto salvation. See esp. Hom. VI, 2, n. 60, and *cf.* Hom. XXXIII, 2, n. 509.

775. Gk. συμμετρία δὲ σωφροσύνη καὶ δικαιοσύνη καὶ πραότης καὶ ταπείνωσις κοσμήσει τὰς ἡμετέρας ψυχάς.

776. As pointed out earlier, the tyrant in question is not Herculius but Galerius Maximianus, see n. 755 above.

Homily Fifty-Two

777. Known in the west as the "Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary", the feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple is celebrated on 21 November, and is counted as one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church; Eng. trans. Mother Mary and Archimandrite [now Metropolitan] Kallistos Ware, *The Festal Menaion* (St. Tikhon's Seminary

Press: South Canaan, PA, 1990, repr. ed.), pp. 164–198. Its celebration in the east dates back to the 8th century; in the west, to the later Middle Ages.

778. Gk. ἡ τῆς αὐτοαγαθότητος μήτηρ.

779. Gk. ἡ τῆς ἀϊδίου καλλονῆς γεννήτρια.

780. Gk. πῶς οὐκ ἂν ἀσυγκρίτως ὑπερέχοι τῇ καλοκἀγαθίᾳ πᾶν ἀγαθὸν ἐγκόσμιόν τε καὶ ὑπερκόσμιον; lit. *How could she not incomparably surpass in goodness every good thing both in this world and in the world beyond?*

781. Gk. ἡ καλλιεργήσασα δύναμις; καλλιεργήσασα. from καλλιεργέω. *to be worked beautifully*; *to be well-cultivated.*

782. Gk. ἡ συναΐδιος καὶ ἀπαράλλακτος εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος τοῦ ἀνωτάτου Πατρὸς ὁ προαιώνιος καὶ ὑπερούσιος καὶ ὑπεράγαθος Λόγος. *cf.* n. 322.

783. Gk. καὶ ἀναβιβάσῃ πρὸς τὸ ὑπερουράνιον τῆς αὐτοῦ βασιλείας καὶ θεότητος ὕψος.

784. Gk. ἑνωθεὶς αὐτῇ καθ' ὑπόστασιν.

785. Gk. φθόνος καὶ ζηλοτυπία καὶ μῖσος. ἀδικία τε καὶ δόλος καὶ σοφιστεία. καὶ πρὸς τούτοις καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις. θανατηφόρος ἣν ἔχει παρ' ἑαυτῷ δύναμις. and see n. 791 below.

786. Gk. τῆς ὄντως ζωῆς.

787. Gk. ὁ δολερὸς καὶ ὄντως μισάνθρωπος ὄφις.

788. Gk. τῷ δόλῳ καὶ τῇ πονηρίᾳ ἐχρήσατο.

789. Gk. διὰ τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ ὄφεως.

790. *Cf.* Hom. XVI, 5, n. 208, and esp. n. 331 (Hom. XXII, 3).

791. Gk. ἀδικίᾳ καὶ δόλῳ καὶ ἀπάτῃ καὶ σοφιστείᾳ. and see n. 785 above.

792. Gk. μεμολυσμένῃ φύσει. *with defiled* or *polluted nature.*

793. Gk. ἡ γὰρ κατὰ σάρκα πρὸς γένεσιν κίνησις. ἀκούσιος οὖσα καὶ τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοὸς ἀπειθής. On "the physical impulse to reproduce" *vis-à-vis* the consequences of the fall, see esp. Hom. XIV, 5, n. 194 above.

794. Gk. προσευχῇ καὶ θυμηδίᾳ πνευματικῇ.

795. Gk. ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ Σὴθ [*Seth*]. ἀνάστασις μᾶλλον δὲ ἐξανάστασις ἑρμηνεύεται (Heb. שֵׁת, *Sheth*. from the verb שִׁית, *shith*. meaning *put*, *set*); see also Hom. LVII, 4, n. 1019.

796. Much of the wording of § 10 is identical to §§ 5–6 of Hom. LVII. On St. Gregory's use of Gen. 4:26, see esp. n. 53 (Hom. V, 15), and n. 1022 (Hom. LVII, 5–6).

797. The tradition from which St. Gregory draws the various details relating to Joachim and Anna, the birth of the Mother of God, her earliest years and her Entry into the Holy of Holies, is derived principally from the apocryphal (but orthodox) work known as the *Book of James* or *Protevangelium*; Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 57–67); and see Hom. XXXVII, esp. nn. 569–571, 575–576, 578 and 581; also Hom. XLII, n. 639.

798. *Book of James (Protevangelium)* I, 4 – IV, 1; Elliott, *ibid.*, pp. 57–58. See also Hom. LIII, 23.

799. *Ibid.*, VII, 2; p. 60.

800. Gk. καὶ φρενῶν οὐκ ἀμοιροῦσα τελείων, ἐπιγνώμων … τῶν ἐπ᾽ αὐτῇ τελουμένων.

801. *Op. cit.*., VII, 3 – VIII, 1; p. 60. See also Hom. LIII, 24–25.

802. *Ibid.* See also Hom. LIII, 44 and 46.

803. *Ibid.*, VIII, 2; p. 60: she lived in the Temple for about nine years, till she was "twelve years old"; though some MSS give "fourteen" or "ten" as her age at that time.

804. For the liturgical "today", see n. 310 above (Hom. XXI, 2).

805. On the Maximian "from flesh to spirit", see n. 519 (Hom. XXXIV, 8).

Homily Fifty-Three

806. Probably the most famous of all his writings, St. Gregory's second sermon on the Entry of the Mother of God into the Holy of Holies was begun around 1334, when he was about thirty-eight years of age, and periodically reworked until it reached its present form. In this homily the Theotokos is presented as the archetype of the hesychastic way of life, the way of "stillness" (Gk. ἡσυχία, *cf.* Ps. 46:10, and Hom. LIII, 52, n. 874 below), which is based on the practice of the Prayer of the Heart or the Jesus Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me* (Gk. Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ. Υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐλέησόν με). St. Gregory also refers to the Jesus Prayer as "the supplication" or "prayer of a single thought" (ἡ μονολόγιστος δέησις or εὐχή), see n. 10 above (Hom. II, 13).

807. Professor Chrestou suggests that this is an allusion to Atlas, leader of the mythical Titans, who, as punishment for rebelling against Zeus, was constrained to bear the heavens on his shoulders (*op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 262, n. 1); but perhaps more to the point is the claim of Archimedes of Syracuse (*c.* 287–212 BC), the Greek mathematician, astronomer and engineer, who is reputed to have boasted, "Give me a place to stand, and I shall move the earth" (Gk. Δός μοι που στῶ καὶ κίνω τὴν γῆν).

808. As for example in the case of Otus and Ephialtes (also known as the Aloeidae), who were the handsome giant twin sons of Aloeus, himself a son of Poseidon. They tried to reach heaven in order to attack the gods by stacking Mount Ossa on Mount Olympus, and Mount Pelion on top of Mount Ossa. Similarly, we have the example of Icarus, who in seeking to escape from king Minos with his father, Daedalus, disobeyed him and flew too close to the sun, rejoicing in his ability to soar up towards heaven. This caused the wax on his wings to melt, and consequently Icarus fell into the sea and was killed.

809. Once again, the main details relating to the Mother of God's infancy are drawn from the *Book of James* or *Protevangelium* (see n. 797 above), and these have also entered the hymnography of the Church (see the service for the feast in *The Festal Menaion, loc. cit.*).

810. Gk. νοῦς.

811. Gk. θεοπάτορες, lit. *ancestors of God.* See also the term *forefathers* (Gk. προπάτορες), employed in the title for the "Sunday of the Holy Forefathers of Christ" (Κυριακὴ τῶν Προπατόρων), n. 952 below.

812. See above, Hom. LII, 11–14, nn. 797–803.

813. Gk. εἰκόνα συμφυᾶ ἑαυτῷ κατασκευάσαι ᾑρετίσατο. That is to say, the human nature formed in the Ever-Virgin's womb is that of the Son and Word of God, who, in His person or hypostasis, contains the fullness of the divine nature. Hence, by virtue of the hypostatic union and the exchange of natural properties (*communicatio idiomatum*), as St. Paul says, within "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5) is contained "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). On the hypostatic union in Christ, see nn. 41 (Hom. IV, 12), 98 (Hom. VIII, 8), 208 (Hom. XVI, 5), and 689 (Hom. XLVI, 8).

814. Gk. πλὴν ὀνομάτων μηδὲν ἑαυτῇ κρεῖττόν τι προσνείμασα καὶ τὸ ὁμόουλον ὑποποιησαμένη κατὰ τοὺς ἀπὸ γῆς θεσμούς, οἳ τῶν κάτω κειμένων ὥσπερ ὕψει διαφέρειν ἐφιᾶσιν, ἀλλ᾽ οὐχὶ τῶν κατ᾽ ὀρθὸν ἑστώτων.

815. Gk. οὕτω ταύτην οὕτω παγκάλην ὄντως ἐξειργάσατο. On the epithet παγκάλη, see n. 821 below.

816. See above, Hom. LII, 11–14, nn. 797–803.

817. Psalm 45:13, according to the Septuagint, reads: πᾶσα ἡ δόξα αὐτῆς θυγατρὸς βασιλέως ἔσωθεν, see also n. 818 below.

818. The difference, as St. Gregory points out, is between ἐντός, *within*, and ἔσωθεν, *from within*, as we find, for example, in the *Codex Alexandrinus* of the fifth century. The Hebrew word, from the Massoretic text, is פְּנִימָה, *p'nîmâh*, *within*, usually used in a context that implies motion, *towards the inside, inwards* (*cf.* Brown, Driver, Briggs, *s.v.*).

819. Gk. ἐξ ἀπαθείας ἄκρας.

820. Gk. καὶ παγκάλην ὄντως οὖσαν ὑποδεικνῦσα τὴν παρθενικὴν ψυχήν. On the meaning of παγκάλην (from πάγκαλος), see n. 821 below.

821. On account of the episode with Potiphar's wife, in Gen. 39:7–12, the patriarch Joseph is referred to by tradition as "the Chaste" (ὁ σώφρων), and it is chiefly in this sense that St. Gregory employs the epithet πάγκαλος, meaning *of exquisite beauty, all-beautiful,* or *all-good,* which is based on the Septuagint's description of Joseph in Gen. 39:6: καὶ ἦν Ἰωσὴφ καλὸς τῷ εἴδει, καὶ ὡραῖος τῇ ὄψει σφόδρα. *And Joseph was handsome in form, and exceedingly beautiful in countenance* (the AV simply reads: *And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured*). For the liturgical use of these terms, see *e.g.* the *Kontakion* and *Ikos,* as well as "The serpent found a second Eve in the Egyptian woman . . .", which is the *Glory* (*Doxastikon*) of the *Aposticha* for Matins for Holy and Great Monday, in *The Triodion*; Eng. trans. Mother Mary and Archimandrite [now Metropolitan] Kallistos Ware, *The Lenten Triodion* (St. Tikhon's Seminary Press: South Canaan, PA, 1994, repr. ed.), pp. 513 and 516.

822. Gk. τοῖς μὲν καθ' ἡμᾶς ὁρῶσιν, lit. *to those who see after our own fashion,* that is to say, *in a human, physical way.*

823. That is to say, those who are inpired by the Holy Spirit are able to discern that the surpassing beauty of the Mother of God stems from the purity of her soul.

824. Gk. οὐδ' ἐπίκτητόν τιν' ἄλλην φύσιν ἑαυτῇ. The word ἐπίκτητος means *acquired.*

825. Gk. τὴν ἄνωθεν σοφίαν.

826. A reference to the fact that Christ is both true and perfect God and true and perfect man, see above nn. 41, 97–98, and 490.

827. Gk. σκηνὴ οὐκ ἀσωμάτων τύπους ἢ σωματικῶν ἐμπεριέχουσα τύπων ἀπαρχάς, as did the Mosaic tabernacle, see *e.g.* Exod. 25:3; 26:1ff; and 36:8ff.

828. For refs. to the prayer of Joachim and Anna, see n. 798 above.

829. See n. 801 above.

830. Note here the subtle difference in emphasis between the Septuagint's "I have not been sufficient [οὐχ ἱκανός εἰμι] in former times" (lit. "before yesterday, neither before the third day"), which is the text that St. Gregory has in mind, and the Massoretic text's, "I am not eloquent, neither heretofore" (Exod. 4:10). Thus, for St. Gregory, Moses' own witness to his not being "sufficient" is a sign of a certain lack of discretion in his youth.

831. Referring to the high priest's ceremonial vestments, see esp. Exod. 28:1ff.

832. For example, Moses' vision of the burning bush (Exod. 3:1–6), which also prefigures the Mother of God's ever-virginity – that she was to remain virgin even after giving birth to God the Word (*cf.* Ezek. 44:1–2); and see § 36 below.

833. That is to say, together with the people of Israel.

834. St. Gregory's definition here of "heaven" (οὐρανός – *ouranos*) as deriving from "boundary" (ὅρος – *boros*) and "above" or "upper" (ἄνω – *ano*) is based on that of a spurious work contained in the *corpus aristotelicum* entitled "On the Universe" (*De Mundo*) 400^{a} 7. Though considered incorrect, its true etymology remains doubtful, Liddell and Scott, *s.v.* οὐρανός; and see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 296, n. 28.

835. See above nn. 22–23, 63, and *cf.* 298.

836. On pre-Christ translations into heaven, see Hom. XXI, 2–4, esp. n. 312.

837. Gk. ἡ ἀνύμφευτος νύμφη; and compare the refrain, Χαῖρε νύμφη ἀνύμφευτε, *Rejoice O unwedded bride*, of the *Akathistos Hymn* (early 6th century; possibly by St. Romanus "Melodos", *fl. c.* 540, but disputed).

838. Gk. τὰ ἄδυτα, *sanctuary.*

839. St. Gregory probably has the well-known *Megalynarion* to the Mother of God in mind here: "More honourable than the cherubim and past compare more glorious than the seraphim" (Τὴν τιμιωτέραν τῶν χερουβὶμ καὶ ἐνδοξοτέραν ἀσυγκρίτως τῶν σεραφίμ . . .), which confesses the Theotokos to be not only higher in honour than the cherubim (traditionally second in the order of the celestial hierarchy), but *incomparably* greater even than the seraphim (traditionally first among the ranks of the heavenly hosts), see n. 559 above.

840. The burning coal is a figure or type of the divine eucharist.

841. See also Hom. XIV, 8, n. 197 above; and § 47 below.

842. Based on III, 3 in Dionysius the Areopagite's *Celestial Hierarchy*; Eng. trans. Colm Luibheid, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, in Classics of Western Spirituality (Paulist Press: New York, 1987), p. 155.

843. St. Gregory is of course referring here to the children of Israel, who could not perceive the deeper meaning of the heavenly manna, and who did not cease from displeasing God, because "their heart was not right with [the Lord], neither were they stedfast in his covenant" (Ps. 78:37). Both king David and king Solomon refer to the manna of Exod. 16:15, 31–35 and Num. 11:6–9 as "bread of angels" (ἄρτον ἀγγέλων), Psalm 78:25 LXX, and as "angels' food" (ἀγγέλων τροφὴν), Wisd. 16:20, respectively, and would certainly be numbered among those who are "wise in divine matters" and "who possessed foresight through the Holy Spirit". See what he says esp. in § 44 below.

844. See Hom. LII, 13, n. 802.

845. Gk. ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὴ ἡ τοῦ Ὑψίστου ἐνυπόστατος δύναμις, lit. *the very same enhypostatic power of the Highest.* See Hom. VIII, 8, n. 94.

846. Gk. φωνὴ αὔρας λεπτῆς. The Massoretic text for 1 Kgs. 19:12 reads: "a still small voice" (Heb. קוֹל דְּמָמָה דַקָּה, *Qôl dᵉmâmâ dhaqâ*), with דְּמָמָה, *dᵉmâmâ,* meaning lit. *calm, humming stillness.*

847. Gk. τὸ τῆς διανοίας ὄμμα.

848. *Cf.* n. 419 (Hom. XXVIII, 3) above.

849. See Hom. LII, 13, n. 802 above.

850. "Pleasure" (ἡδονή) is inseparable from "pain" (ὀδύνη), as we see most clearly in childbirth (see esp. n. 204 above), because it is a direct result of man's subjection to death and corruption through sin (*cf.* Gen. 3:16). This, however, was not the case with the Holy Virgin, who by the tender age of three had not only attained to the spritual state of "passionlessness" (ἀπάθεια), that is to say, to perfect lordship over the passions (see n. 123 above), but had even achieved "deification" (θέωσις), see nn. 161, 183, 419, and esp. 568–569; also *cf.* 244. Therefore, she remained sinless and virgin, suffering no corruption whatever even after giving birth to Christ. See esp. § 38 above, and also Hom. XIV, 5 and 8, nn. 194 and 197, respectively.

851. Gk. ἀφθαρσία, lit. *incorruption,* often, as here, used in sense indistinguishable from *immortality* (lit. ἀθανασία), see Lampe, *s.vv.* For the significance of "corruption" and "incorruption" in Patristic literature, see nn. 204, 208, *cf.* 96–97, 263; and 197, 644, and *cf.* 263, respectively.

852. Gk. μεταβολή.

853. Gk. τῆς ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἀγωγῆς, τῆς ἐν παραδείσῳ καταγωγῆς, τῆς κατ᾽ αὐτὸν ἐντολῆς, τῆς ἀπολουμένης ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ συμβουλῆς, τῆς ἀπ᾽ αὐτῆς κλοπῆς, τῆς δι᾽ αὐτὴν ἐκβολῆς ἐκεῖθεν καὶ τῆς ἀφθαρσίας ἀποβολῆς καὶ πρὸς τὸν πολυώδυνον τοῦτον βίον μεταβολῆς. Note the deliberate poetic repetition of the genetive in all these phrases: ἀγωγῆς, καταγωγῆς, ἐντολῆς, συμβουλῆς, κλοπῆς, ἐκβολῆς, ἀποβολῆς, μεταβολῆς. See also nn. 850 and 851 above.

854. Gk. ἡ θεόπαις Παρθένος.

855. That is to say, she discovered her unity with all mankind, and began to pray for the whole world (see also § 49).

856. See n. 855 above.

857. Gk. γνῶσις ἅπαν ἐστί, or *is all knowledge.*

858. Gk. δι᾽ ἧς φύσεως ἐρευνώμεθα λόγους.

859. Gk. καὶ τῶν τῆς ὕλης ἀχωρίστως χωριζομένων ἀναλογίας καὶ σχηματισμοὺς καὶ ποσότητας.

860. St. Gregory is embarking here on an excursus regarding the relation between pagan philosophy, which he regards as overly centered on the activity of the rational aspect of the mind (based principally on discursive thinking, syllogisms, and so forth), and theology, based on the knowledge that stems from the vision of God. The former, the way of philosophical speculation, is led by the mind, the latter, which is attested to by Holy Scripture and the lives of the saints, by direct revelation of God Himself.

861. By which St. Gregory refers to the pagans of Greek-speaking antiquity. Greek-speaking Christians, however, when referring to themselves, would often use the term "Roman", meaning "of the Christian Roman Empire" (from Constantine the Great onwards), which is not to be confused with the ancient Romans, who were of course also pagans. To this day, for instance, "Romaic" is a term used to refer to the modern Greek vernacular (*The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J. B. Sykes, 1976, *s.v.*); and corruptions of the term "Roman" are still used to designate Orthodox Christians in the various parts of the former eastern provinces of the Roman Empire: in the Eastern Mediterranean, Asia Minor (present day Turkey), and also the Middle East.

862. Gk. πρώτη φιλοσοφία, lit. *the first philosophy*, that is to say, *metaphysics* (see Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VI, 1, 1026^{a} 24).

863. That is to say, they are not aware of contemplation beyond that of the *noetic*, meaning, contemplation which is centered on the mind (νοῦς). But for St. Gregory there exists a further, higher level of contemplation: the vision of the uncreated God, which signifies union with Him, and by which the human person is deified, and every aspect of his createdness, including his mind, is transcended, see nn. 384 (Hom. XXV, 1) and 419 (Hom. XXVIII, 3).

864. What follows in this paragraph is almost word for word identical with a passage from St. Gregory's *Triads in Defence of the Holy Hesychasts* I, 3, 42, in P. Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ· Συγγράμματα* [*Gregory Palamas: The Writings*], vol. 1 (Thessalonica, 1988), pp. 453–454, and almost certainly drawn from it (and Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 328, n. 68).

865. Gk. καθ' ὅσον καὶ τὸ κεκτῆσθαι τοῦ εἰδέναι διώρισται.

866. Gk. περὶ Θεοῦ γάρ τι λέγειν καὶ Θεῷ συντυγχάνειν οὐχὶ ταὐτόν. Though simple in formulation, this is a brilliant and concise definition of the difference between philosophy and theology. Notice also the striking similarity between St. Gregory's assertion here and that of St. Silouan the Athonite, who affirms: "To believe that God exists is one thing, to know God another", in *Saint Silouan the Athonite, op. cit.*, p. 354.

867. That is to say, examples taken from the created order, which are perceived merely by the senses, and not by the "eye of the mind", see *e.g.* n. 847 above.

868. A description of what the vision of God is not. However, St. Gregory goes on to give the presuppositions for meeting God Himself.

869. Gk. ὑπεραρθέντες δὲ λογισμῶν καὶ συλλογισμῶν καὶ γνώσεως πάσης καὶ τῆς διανοίας αὐτῆς.

870. Gk. τῆς κατ' αἴσθησιν νοερὰν ἐνεργείας.

871. Gk. ἣν θείαν αἴσθησιν ὁ Σολομῶν προεῖπε. The phrase θεία αἴσθησις, translated here as *divine awareness* (see also *e.g.* Hom. LIII, 60), lit. *a divine sense, sensation* or *perception,* is based on a legitimate reading of Prov. 2:3–5. It is found in Origen's recension (3rd century): "Thou shalt find a divine sense" (ὅτι αἴσθησιν θείαν εὑρήσεις), see *e.g.* his *Contra Celsum* VII, 34, and is repeated by such writers as St. Gregory of Nyssa, in *e.g.* his *Homilies on the Song of Songs* IX (PG 44:957C), and St. Maximus the Confessor, in *e.g.* his *Ambigua* (PG 91:1248B), all of whom Palamas had read. Interestingly, the Septuagint (including *Codex Sinaïticus* and *Codex Vaticanus,* both of the 4th century, as well as *Codex Alexandrinus* of the 5th century) reads: "Thou shalt find the knowledge of God" (ἐπίγνωσιν θεοῦ εὑρήσεις); and the AV (based on the Massoretic text) has: "Then shalt thou . . . find the knowledge of God" (Heb. וְדַעַת אֱלֹהִים תִּמְצָא, *wʿdhaʿath 'Elōhîm timsāʾ*. But, the Hebrew word דַּעַת, *daʿath,* may be rendered either as ἐπίγνωσις (*knowledge*) or αἴσθησις (*sense*), see *e.g.* Hatch and Redpath, *op. cit., s.vv.*; and *cf.* also Prov. 1:7: εὐσέβεια δὲ εἰς Θεόν ἀρχὴ αἰσθήσεως. *Godward piety is the beginning of perception*, and Prov. 15:14: Καρδία ὀρθὴ ζητεῖ αἴσθησιν. *The heart of an upright man seeks for a sensation,* in which דַּעַת, *daʿath,* is rendered as αἴσθησις.

872. Gk. καὶ τυχόντες τῆς ὑπὲρ τὴν γνῶσιν ἀγνοίας, *and attain to that unknowing which is above knowing.* For similar use of this kind of language, see *e.g.* St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* II, 162–164, St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names* I, 1, II, 4, IV, 11, VII, 3, and XI, 1; *The Mystical Theology* I, 1, and II, and *Letter* I (PG 3:1065A); and St. Maximus the Confessor, in his *Ambigua* (PG 91:1168B), *Third Century on Love* 99 (PG 90:1048A): Νοῦς ἐστι τέλειος, ὁ διὰ πίστεως ἀληθοῦς, τὸν ὑπεράγνωστον ὑπεραγνώστως ὑπερεγνωκώς. *A perfect mind is one which by true faith knows beyond knowing, in a way that transcends even unknowing, the One who is unknowable*; Eng. trans. in *The Philokalia, op. cit.*, p. 99 [revised]; and *cf.* Abba Thalassius, *Centuries on Love and Self-Control and on the Governance of the Mind* I, 73 (PG 91:1433D); and *cf.* n. 419 above.

873. St. Gregory is aware that philosophy at its noblest is based on a way of life, and indeed, as the great phiosopher Socrates says in Plato's *Phaedo* 64A, true philosophy is nothing less than a preparation for "dying and being dead" (ἀποθνήσκειν τε καὶ τεθνάναι).

874. Gk. τὴν ἱερὰν ἡσυχίαν εὑρίσκει χειραγωγόν· ἡσυχίαν τὴν νοῦ καὶ κόσμου στάσιν. Gk. ἡσυχία, lit. *silence, tranquillity, quiet*, but in this context, better translated as *quietness* or *stillness* (*cf.* Ps. 46:10), see also n. 10 (Hom. II, 13) and n. 806 above.

875. Gk. αὕτη πρᾶξις ὡς ἀληθῶς, lit. *this is truly activity.*

876. Gk. ἐπίβασις τῆς ὡς ἀληθῶς θεωρίας ἢ θεοπτίας. On contemplation or the vision of God, see Hom. XI, 7 and 12, nn. 136 and 148, Hom. XXXIV, 10, n. 521, and *cf.* nn. 106 (Hom. IX, 1), 183 (Hom. XIII, 7), 247 and 253 (Hom. XVII, 7 and 8), and 746 (Hom. XLIX, 1).

877. Gk. [θεωρίας ἢ θεοπτίας] . . . ἣ μόνη δεῖγμα τῆς ὡς ἀληθῶς εὐεκτούσης ψυχῆς. See esp. n. 876 above, and St. Symeon the New Theologian, who regards the desire for the vision of God as a fundamental characteristic of the Christian life, and goes so far as to say that the lack of such a desire is unforgivable, as it reveals one's spiritual condition as "dead or blind or sick or paralysed and separated from the service of Christ", *Catechetical Sermons* (*Catecheses*) XXIX (*Sources Chrétiennes*. Introduction, Critical Text and Notes by Archbishop Basil Krivocheine, trans. J. Paramelle (Paris, 1965), 113:176,^{137}–178,^{167}).

878. Gk. θεωρία δέ ἐστι τῆς ὑγιαινούσης ὁ καρπός, οἷόν τι τέλος οὖσα καὶ εἶδος θεουργόν· δι' αὐτῆς γὰρ θεοποιεῖται ἄνθρωπος. See also nn. 876 and 877 above.

879. Gk. θιγομέν πως τῆς ἀθίκτου καὶ μακαρίας οὐσεως ἐκείνης. For St. Gregory's essence–energies distinction, see *e.g.* nn. 37–38 (Hom. IV, 3), 103 (Hom. VIII, 13), 150–151 (Hom. XI, 12), 193 (Hom. XIV, 1), 515 and 523 (Hom. XXXIV, 3 and 10), 551 (Hom. XXXV, 16) above.

880. Gk. Καὶ οὕτως αὐτοῖς ἀνακραθέντος ἀπορρήτως τοῦ ὑπὲρ αἴσθησιν καὶ νοῦν φωτός, ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ὡς ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ θεωροῦσι τὸν Θεὸν οἱ τὴν καρδίαν δι' ἱερᾶς ἡσυχίας καθαρθέντες. *Cf.* 2 Cor. 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [*sc.* reflecting as in a mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"; and see St. Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary on the Song of Songs* IV (PG 44:832D–833C); *From Glory to Glory, op. cit.*, pp. 170–171; and note esp. the phrase: "By coming closer to the inaccessible Beauty you have yourself become beautiful, and like a mirror, as it were, you have taken on my appearance"; and *cf.* St. Gregory the Sinaïte, in his *Discourse on the Transfiguration* 1 (644,$^{1-4}$), who refers to "all those who reflect as mirrors the vision of magnificent glory with unveiled countenance".

881. Gk. μόνη πάντων θεάνθρωπον Λόγον ἀπειράνδρως ἐκυοφόρησεν, referring to the one person of the Son and Word of God, who, having assumed perfect human nature from the Holy Virgin, is referred to as the

God-man. In other words, there are not two persons in Christ. That Christ is the God-man refers to the union of two natures, the divine and the human, in the second divine person of the Holy Trinity. See *e.g.* nn. 21 (Hom. III, 5), 66 (Hom. VI, 10), and esp. 331 (Hom. XXII, 3), and *cf.* nn. 41 (Hom. IV, 12) and 221 (Hom. XVI, 29).

882. Gk. Ἐγὼ τὸν τρόπον ἐκεῖνον τῶν ἐγκωμίων ἄγαμαι, ὃς καὶ τοὺς ἀκροωμένους ὀνίνησι τὴν σωτήριον ἀνακαλύπτων ὁδόν· κἂν δυσξύμβλητον ὂν τυγχάνῃ τι τῶν λεγομένων καὶ τῷ μετεώρῳ τῆς διανοίας οὐ ῥαδίως ληπτόν, οὐκ ἔξω ῥίπτειν οἴομαι τῆς ἱερᾶς αὐλῆς· ἐπεὶ μηδὲ τὴν πρὸς τὴν ζωὴν ἀπάγουσαν ἐκκλίνομεν ὅτι στενὴ καὶ δυσχερὴς ἀνῦσαι. Notice that for St. Gregory the best type of sermon is one which reveals the "way of salvation" to the people of God, and that this great ascetic and master of the spiritual life, far from being condescending towards his flock, does not hesitate to offer them "strong meat" (Heb. 5:12–14), even though he knows that it will be beyond the capacity of some. His pastoral concern here, as he makes clear in Hom. XVII, 1–2 (see also n. 233), is to edify all of his congregation, and to position them correctly before the greatest challenge of all – the perfection of Jesus Christ.

883. Gk. πρὸς τὸ μέγεθος τῆς διανοίας συντόνως ἐπάρατε. Coming into contact with God also requires an effort on man's part, and this is the basic presupposition of the ascetic life.

884. Gk. [Ἄνθρωπος] . . . ἡ συνδρομὴ τοῦ παντός, ἡ ἀνακεφαλαίωσις τῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ κτισμάτων. For man as the crowning point of God's creation in St. Gregory, see *e.g.* Hom. III, 5, esp. n. 21; and as drawing all things together in his person, see Hom. XXVI, 1, esp. n. 395. Note also that much of the wording of Hom. XXVI, §§ 1 and 2 is borrowed from §§ 55 and 56 of this homily.

885. *Cf.* Hom. XXVI, 1, n. 395; and St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his *On the Creation of Man* II, 1 (PG 44:133A), who identifies man as the last – because he is the greatest – of God's creatures. And see the preceding note, and esp. n. 21 (Hom. III, 5) above.

886. Gk. μέσοις οἷον συνδέσμοις γνησιωτάτοις τῶν ἄκρων χρῆται φαντασίᾳ καὶ δόξῃ καὶ διανοίᾳ, the extremes here, τὰ ἄκρα, being the spiritual and the physical or material. In this way, as Palamas in § 1 of Hom. XXVI says, man was made both a spiritual and visible being (see Hom. XXVI, 1, n. 397, for the same phraseology).

887. What is true of the world is also true of man: unity in diversity. All the different elements of the universe are brought together, unified, in the human person. The question of "opposites" (τὰ ἐναντία or τὰ ἀντικείμενα) has a long pre-history, and may be traced back at least as far as the Milesian philosophers of the sixth century BC, especially to Anaximander and Anaximenes, who refer to

the opposites in the context of their search for the primitive element underlying all things – the ἀρχή (*arche*), relevant fragments survive in St. Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of all Heresies* I, vi, 1–7, and vii 1–9, respectively; to Alcmaeon (early 6th cent. BC), the physician influenced by Pythagoras, who regarded the purpose of medicine as maintaining the balance of the various pairs of opposites in human beings, see Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 986^{a}30–34, and esp. Plutarch, *On the Scientific Beliefs of the Philosophers* 911A; and to Aristotle, who referred to the forms also as opposites, as matter or objects *informed* with certain qualities – which is why the Greek word for *object* is in fact ἀντικείμενον, lit. *opposite, that which is placed* or *lies over against* (*something*), see *e.g.* his *Physics* 205^{a}6 and *Metaphysics* 1069^{b}3. However, for the theme of unity in diversity, with specific reference to opposites, it is to Heraclitus (*c.* 500 BC) that we must turn, to the pre-Socratic philosopher known as "the Riddler", for whom unity is perceived as resulting from the tension of opposites, see St. Hippolytus, *op. cit.*, IX, ix, 1–x, 9, and Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* IX, 1–3, 5–12, 15. See also n. 22 and esp. n. 398 above, and *cf.* nn. 23, 63, and 298.

888. Gk. κοινωνοῦσιν ἀλλήλοις.

889. Gk. ὑπερέχει δὲ ἐκεῖνος τῷ μεγέθει, οὗτος δὲ τῇ συνέσει. As a spiritual, as well as a visible and physical being, man is infinitely greater in dignity and honour than the material universe (*cf.* nn. 884–887 above). See Hom. XXVI, 1, where St. Gregory makes the same analogy. And for man as a micro-*theos*, see esp. n. 395 above.

890. *Ibid.*

891. Lost, that is to say, at the fall. St. Gregory is speaking here of man in his present, post-lapsarian state, in which he is still far from being like Christ, the King, the pattern and purpose of our existence.

892. Gk. ἀλλὰ βασίλειός τις σκευὴ ποικίλη καὶ πολυτάλαντος. The term σκευή probably refers to royal dress studded with precious stones; although it might also refer to a piece of decorative furniture, or to a finely made piece of precious jewelry (see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 332, n. 70). *Cf.* Hom. XXVI, 1.

893. Gk. Πόσον οὐρανοῦ κρείττων νοῦς; and *cf.* Hom. XXVI, 2, which specifies ὁ ἀνθρώπινος νοῦς.

894. Note St. Gregory's daring phrase, "and alone of everything on earth can, if it wishes, become God" (καὶ μόνος τῶν ἐγκοσμίων Θεός, εἰ βούλεται, γίνεται), which once again touches the boundaries of theological expression (see esp. Hom. XIV, 1, n. 193 above). *Cf.* Hom. XXVI, 2. As indicated elsewhere (see *e.g.* Hom. XL, 5, n. 607 and Hom. XLVI, 11, n. 702), the salvation and deification of the human person in St. Gregory (as also more widely in the Church Fathers) also includes the physical, human body.

895. *Cf.* Hom. XXVI, 2.

896. Gk. Δύναμις μὲν οὖν ἄλογός ἐστιν ἡ αἴσθησις.

897. Gk. φαντασία, see *e.g.* n. 84 (Hom. VII, 11).

898. Gk. καὶ νοῦς μὲν λέγοιτ᾽ ἄν, ἣ [*sc.* ἡ φαντασία] δίχα τούτων ἐνεργεῖ. St. Gregory is pointing out that the imagination may be referred to as mind, in the sense that the imagination has the ability to operate on its own, independently, without the stimulus of sensory objects. However, see following note, n. 899.

899. Gk. παθητικὸς δ᾽ ὅμως ὡς οὐκ ἔξω μεριστῶν. The imagination does not need the direct stimulus of sensory objects in order to function, *but* it is still necessarily limited to its experience of the created, material world – "things divisible". And because it too receives and depends upon concepts and images taken from the created, material world, it is passive (see the *passive mind* or *aspect of the soul* n. 656, Hom. XLIII, 12 above) and, unlike the *nous* proper (see n. 32 above), incapable of separate existence (see also νοῦς ποιητικός, n. 656 above).

900. Gk. Δόξα δὲ ἡ μὲν ἀπὸ φαντασίας ὁρμωμένη ψῆφος ἄλογός ἐστιν. Any opinion (δόξα) based on the imagination is necessarily irrational. St. John Damascene, in his *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 12, divides the powers of the soul into the *reasonable* or *rational* and the *unreasonable* or *irrational* (λογικὸν καὶ ἄλογον). He then further divides the *unreasonable* or *irrational* aspect of the soul into two: into *that which does not listen to reason* or *is disobedient to reason* (τὸ ἀνήκοον λόγῳ), and *that which listens and obeys* (τὸ κατήκοον καὶ ἐπιπειθὲς λόγῳ). To the former belong *the vital* or *life-giving* faculty or power (τὸ ζωτικόν), also called *the pulsating* (τὸ σφυγμικόν), *the spermatic* (τὸ σπερματικόν), which is *the generative* (τὸ γεννητικόν) and *the vegetative* (τὸ φυτικόν), also called *the nutritive* (τὸ θρεπτικόν), to which also belongs the faculty of *growth* (τὸ αὐξητικόν), *which fashions bodies* (τὸ καὶ διαπλάσσον τὰ σώματα) – these are not governed by reason, but only by nature (οὐ λόγῳ κυβερνῶνται, ἀλλὰ τῇ φύσει). To the latter, however, belong the impulses of *anger* (θυμός) and *desire* (ἐπιθυμία), which are capable of listening and being obedient to reason. It is to this class of irrational power that the imagination (φαντασία) belongs. See also n. 656 above (Hom. XLIII, 12).

901. Gk. ἡ δ᾽ ἀπὸ τῆς διανοίας οὔ. However, when opinion (δόξα) is based on the discursive or reasoning aspect of the soul (the διάνοια) it is rational. See esp. n. 25 (Hom. III, 7) above.

902. Gk. διεξοδικῶς, lit. *throughly, in detail,* that is to say, *step by step* or *gradually by discursive thinking,* see esp. n. 25 above (Hom. III, 7).

903. Gk. τοῦ ψυχικοῦ ἐν ἐγκεφάλῳ πνεύματος. See also § 57, n. 906 below.

904. Gk. Νοῦ δὲ ὄργανον οὐδέν ἐστιν, ἀλλ᾽ αὐτοτελὴς ἐστιν οὐσία καὶ καθ᾽ ἑαυτὴν οὖσα ἐνεργητική, εἰ καὶ πρὸς τὴν κατὰ διάνοιαν ψυχικήν τε καὶ ἀνελιγμένην ζωὴν ὑποκαταβιβάζει ἑαυτόν. Unlike the irrational power of the human senses (αἴσθησις), unlike the faculty of the imagination (φαντασία), and unlike the reasoning aspect of the soul (διάνοια), the human mind (νοῦς) is a faculty or power capable of independent existence, see nn. 896–903 above.

905. In the paragraphs which follow (§§ 57–60), St. Gregory sets out to describe the basic idea behind the *prayer of the mind* or *noetic prayer*, see n. 806 above.

906. Gk. ἡ θεόσοφος Παρθένος.

907. Gk. δι᾽ οὗ συνουσίας ἐπιτύχοι Θεοῦ. The word συνουσία, which is defined in Lampe as *community of essence* (see Lampe, *s.v.*), is to be understood in this context as *togetherness* or *communion of being*, and so as *oneness, union*.

908. Gk. ἔτι δὲ καὶ διὰ τοῦ ψυχικοῦ πνεύματος ὡς ὀργάνου τελουμένας. See also § 56, n. 903 above.

909. Gk. Θεὸν ὑπερφυῶς ποθοῦσα καὶ τὴν ὑπερκόσμιον πρὸς τοῦτον ἕνωσιν.

910. Gk. Πρὸς δὴ τοῦτον τὸν ἱερὸν καὶ θεῖον ἔρωτα μόνον εὑρίσκει πεφυκὸς ἀκριβῶς τὸ ἀκρότατον τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν, τὴν μόνην τελείαν καὶ πάντῃ ἀμερῆ τῶν καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς οὐσίαν. The mind (νοῦς) alone, of all human faculties or powers, is pure spirit and capable of separate existence, see n. 904 above.

911. Gk. ἅτε εἶδος οὖσα τῶν εἰδῶν, lit. *inasmuch as [the mind] is the form of forms*, that is to say, the mind (νοῦς) is the supreme faculty of the human soul.

912. Gk. τοὺς κατὰ διάνοιαν ἀνελιγμούς. Note that the word ἀνέλιγμα, which is derived from ἀνέλιξις, means *unfolding, evolution*.

913. Gk. ἐν οἷς τὰ τῶν ἐπιστημῶν ἔχει τὴν ἀσφάλειαν, lit. *in which the sciences have their certainty* or *trust*.

914. Gk. ἐπειδὰν ἢ μερισθῇ τοῦ σώματος καὶ τῶν ὅσα σώματος.

915. Gk. δι᾽ ἐπιμελείας, that is to say, *by means of ascetic striving*.

916. Gk. χάριτος συναραμένης θείας. The word συναραμένη comes from συναίρω, lit. *lift up, raise up*, and here signifies the *cooperation* or *help* of divine grace.

917. Gk. ἀπαναστῆναι δυνηθῇ τῆς ποικιλοτρόπου ταύτης καὶ πολυειδοῦς καὶ χαμερποῦς διαίτης.

918. Gk. καὶ Θεῷ συγγένοιτο [from συγγίγνομαι, *hold converse with, intercourse, come together*; Liddell and Scott, *s.v.*], and so, enter into union with God.

919. Gk. ταῖς σωματοειδέσι γνώσεσι, lit. *with knowledge of things pertaining to the body* or *of things corporeal*.

920. Gk. ἐξ αὐτῆς … τῆς τοῦ βίου βαλβῖδος.

921. Gk. τὴν ἀόρατον ἅπασι καὶ ἀσυνδύαστον εἵλετο ζωὴν ἐνδιαιτωμένη τοῖς ἀδύτοις.

922. Gk. τῆς πρὸς τὸ οἰκεῖον σῶμα συμπαθείας ὑπεραναβᾶσα, see nn. 493 and 494 (Hom. XXXIII, 5) above.

923. Gk. συνῆψε τὸν νοῦν τῇ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν στροφῇ. In man's fallen condition, the mind is uncentered, unfocused, fragmented and scattered, and therefore incapable of operating as originally intended by God. St. Gregory's reference here to the Mother of God and the union of her mind "with its turning towards itself" (τῇ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν στροφῇ), indicates, as he explains in his address to the nun Xenia, that by her ascetic efforts and the grace of God (see nn. 915 and 916 above) the Mother of God achieved the "reconvergence (ἐπιστροφή, lit. *return*) of all the soul's powers in the mind", the state "in which the mind and God work together" (καὶ ἡ κατ᾽ αὐτόν [*sc.* τὸν νοῦν] τε καὶ Θεὸν ἐνέργεια), see *To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia* 62; trans. *The Philokalia, op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 319: revised.

924. Gk. καὶ προσοχῇ.

925. Gk. καὶ τῇ ἀδιαλείπτῳ θείᾳ προσευχῇ. According to St. Gregory, the Mother of God was the first to discover perfect silence of the mind, see esp. nn. 10 (Hom. II, 13) and 617 (Hom. XL, 24) above, and also n. 928 below.

926. Gk. ἐδείματο (from δέμω, *build, construct*, Liddell and Scott, *s.v.*).

927. Gk. νοητὴ σιγή, and *cf.* n. 806 above.

928. Gk. καὶ κρεῖττον ἢ κατὰ Μωσῆν δόξαν ὁρᾷ Θεοῦ, lit. *and sees a greater glory of God than* [*that which is*] *according to Moses*, that is to say, than the glory of the Old Dispensation, see also n. 925 above.

929. Gk. καὶ θείαν ἐποπτεύει χάριν.

930. Gk. ἥκιστα αἰσθήσεως ὑποπίπτουσιν δυνάμει.

931. Phrases taken from the *Akathistos Hymn* (see n. 837 above) and the Canon for the feast of the Entry (Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 339, n. 73).

932. Gk. οὐδ᾽ ἂν νοῦς ᾖ θείαν εὑρὼν αἴσθησιν. See § 51 and n. 871 above.

933. Gk. τοῖς γὰρ ἀϊδίοις, lit. *to those who are everlasting*; from ἀΐδιος, *eternal, everlasting* (Lampe, *s.v.*) or better, *pre-eternal, sempiternal* (see also nn. 345 and 466 above), commonly reserved for God, who alone is without beginning (see *e.g.* n. 322, and *cf.* 377 above). Once again, however, St. Gregory is alluding to the fact that those who have become united to God share in His very life, and therefore may also be referred to as possessing – by grace – characteristics that are uniquely His by nature.

934. Gk. ὅπερ τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς ἥλιος, τοῦτο τοῖς νοητοῖς Θεός. For similar language, see esp. St. Gregory the Theologian's *Oration* XL, 5, *On Holy*

Baptism (PG 36:364BC): Τοῦτο [*sc.* the divine light] ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς, ὅπερ ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς ἥλιος.

935. Gk. ὁ θείας ἐνεργείας εὐμοιρήσας. On the divine energy, see *e.g.* nn. 100, 139, 149 and 150, and *cf.* nn. 103, 280, and 879 above.

936. Gk. πάντως δὲ καὶ τοῖς ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς τῇ γε φυσικῇ δυνάμει. That is to say, this light is beyond the natural capacity even of the angelic powers.

937. Gk. ἐμφανίζει δὲ ὡς ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ τῷ κεκαθαρμένῳ νῷ. See n. 254 above.

938. Gk. τὴν ὑπερφυᾶ ταύτην ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἤνυσε πρεσβείαν καὶ δι' ἑαυτῆς εἰς τέλος ἤγαγεν. Having become like God, the Mother of God also began to intercede for the whole world, and in her created person-hypostasis brought the intercessory rôle of man to perfection for the first time in human history. *Cf. e.g.* n. 577 above.

939. Gk. οὐ κτησαμένη μόνον τὴν ὑπὲρ λόγον ταύτην ἀνάβασιν τοῦ νοῦ.

940. Gk. οὐκ ἀναπείσασα μόνον.

941. Gk. κεχαριτωμένη, meaning lit. *she who is* already *full of grace*, is much more revealing in this context, see also *e.g.* Hom. XIV, 8, n. 196 above, and Hom. LVII, 3, n. 1015 below.

942. Gk. Θεόπαις.

943. Gk. Θεομήτωρ.

944. Gk. τῇ τοῦ νοῦ καθάρσει καὶ τῇ τῆς θείας χάριτος μεθέξει.

945. Gk. οὐ λογισμοῖς ἀλλ' ἐπαφαῖς ἀΰλοις τοῖς θεοειδέσιν ἐντρυφῶμεν κάλλεσιν, that is, not by thinking or even by means of intellection, but by direct communion in the life of God Himself.

946. See esp. n. 21 (Hom. III, 5), on man as the greatest of God's creatures.

947. Gk. θεανδρικὴ μορφή, see n. 41 and esp. Hom. V, 2, n. 48, and *cf.* nn. 221 and 1047.

948. Gk. καὶ ὡς εἰπεῖν ὁμόθεον τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἀπορρήτως εἰργασμένη φύσιν. See *e.g.* Archimandrite Sophrony, *We Shall See Him*, *op. cit.*, p. 193, who speaks of the mystery of Christ's ascension as denoting the raising of our human nature to the point of equality with God the Father.

949. A variation of a story attested to in Tertullian, *Apology* V, 6, and Eusebius of Caesarea, *History of the Church* V, 5, 3ff. who ascribe the rainstorm to the prayers of a legion of Christians under the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121 – 180; Emperor from 161), the adopted son of Antoninus Pius (138 – 61). The incident in question took place in the Danubian campaigns of Aurelius (172), see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, pp. 344–345, n. 80; and vol. 29 in the same series:

Eusebius of Caesarea: The Complete Works, Ecclesiastical History, vol. 2 (1978), pp. 140–144, nn. 30, 32–35 [in Greek], and is also referred to by *e.g.* Dio Cassius, a pagan writer who makes no mention of Christians. For a fuller discussion, see J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers,* pt. 2. 1 (1885), pp. 469–476.

The "*Legio XII Fulminata*", usually mistranslated "The Thundering Legion" instead of "The Thunderstruck Legion", was originally formed during the reign of Augustus, d. AD 14; and it is interesting to note that the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, in Lesser Armenia, at the time of the Licinian persecution (*c.* 320), were also said to be of the "Thundering Legion", *ODCC, s.vv.* "Marcus Aurelius", "Thundering Legion", and "Sebaste, the Forty Martyrs of".

950. Gk. Ἄνω σχῶμεν τὴν καρδίαν πρὸς αὐτόν, echoing the dialogue between priest and people in the Divine Liturgy, "Let us lift up our hearts" (Ἄνω σχῶμεν τὰς καρδίας), see *e.g. The Orthodox Liturgy, op. cit.*, p. 71.

951. Gk. δερμάτινοι χιτῶνες, *coats of skins* (Gen. 3:21), which for St. Gregory signify "our infirm mortal bodies beset with pain" (Hom. XXXI, 1), and our "earthy and carnal ways of thinking" (Hom. XXXV, 18).

Homily Fifty-Four

952. Homily on the pericope, Eph. 4:25–5:5. Already in St. Gregory's day, the entire month of December had taken on the character of a forefeast for Christmas. In this context, the theme of the original preparatory Sunday, the "Sunday of the Holy Fathers" (Κυριακὴ τῶν ἁγίων Πατέρων), commemorating the ancestors of Christ "according to the flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα), especially the patriarch Abraham, to whom the promise was first given (Gen. 12:3; 22:18), is fundamental to the whole period. Later, however, two additional preparatory Sundays were established, which broadened the original theme to include all the righteous of the Old Dispensation – all those who were well-pleasing to God from Adam to Joseph the Betrothed, including those men and women who had prophesied of the coming of Christ, especially the prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Children (whose feastday falls on 17 December). Hence, the first Sunday before Christmas (between 18 to 24 December) became known as the "Sunday before the nativity of Christ" (Κυριακὴ πρὸ τῆς Χριστοῦ γεννήσεως), see n. 1011 (Hom. LVII) below, while the second Sunday (between 11 to 17 December) took on the name, "Sunday of the Holy Forefathers of Christ" (Κυριακὴ τῶν Προπατόρων) – to distinguish them from the Fathers of ecumenical councils, see n. 973 (Hom. LV) below – while the third Sunday before Christmas (between 1 to 10 December) is simply an extension of the second, continuing the remembrance of all those who lived before and under the law, and is marked by the reading of Luke 13:10–17, which speaks of the Crippled Woman who was Healed by Christ on the Sabbath as

a "daughter of Abraham", see n. 963. Details found in Fountoulis, *Reasonable Worship, op. cit.*, pp. 331–333.

953. Gk. ζωὴ ἔνθεος καὶ ἀΐδιος, lit. *a godly* or *divine and pre-eternal life,* that is to say, the very life of God Himself. For the meaning of ἀΐδιος, see n. 933.

954. Gk. ὁ ἔνδον λογισμός.

955. Gk. ὁ νοῦς καὶ ἡ διάνοια.

956. Gk. τὸ σῶμα καὶ ἡ αἴσθησις.

957. Gk. Τῆς δὲ τοιαύτης ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ καχεξίας τὴν θεραπείαν ἐπιδεικνύς, where καχεξία means lit. *evil habit.*

958. Gk. τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων ὁμολογίαν.

959. Gk. σύνεστι γὰρ τοῖς ἑτοίμοις εἰς φθορὰν ἡ παλαίωσις. On corruption (φθορά) and growing old (παλαίωσις), see esp. Hom. XVI, 5, nn. 208–209.

960. Gk. μὴ παλαιούμενος, see n. 959 above.

961. Gk. ἀρχηγὸν τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς.

962. Gk. Αὐτὸς καὶ τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν ἦρε καὶ τὴν παλαίωσιν ἐκ μέσου πεποίηκεν, see esp. Hom. XVI, 5, nn. 208–209.

963. Note that the theme of the third Sunday before Christmas is an extension of the first and second, see n. 952 above. By this time, however, the Christmas fast had already begun (on 15 November); the singing of the Christmas Canon, "Christ is born, glorify Him" (Χριστὸς γεννᾶται, δοξάσατε), would have been introduced on the feast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Holy of Holies (21 November); and also the Kontakion of the forefeast, "Today the Virgin gives birth to the Pre-eternal Word" (Ἡ παρθένος σήμερον τὸν Προαιώνιον Λόγον), would have been sung from the leave-taking of the feast of the Entry (that is, from 25 November) onwards. But it is in the Gospel reading for the third Sunday before Christmas (Luke 13:10–17) that, in reference to the Crippled Woman who was Healed by Chrsit, we hear the words, "daughter of Abraham", which refer to Christ's own lineage, "according to the flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα), and signal the beginning of the theme of the forefeast for Christmas: the commemoration of Christ's ancestors and, by extension, all the righteous of the Old Dispensation.

964. Gk. τὸν ἐν αὐτῷ κτισθέντα κατὰ Θεὸν ἄνθρωπον, referring to Christ's own humanity. Note, however, that in His assumption of human flesh, the Son and Word of God did not unite Himself with a human hypostasis or person, but rather "became flesh" (σὰρξ ἐγένετο, John 1:14), that is to say, He united human nature to His divine person, see esp. n. 48 above.

965. Gk. δι᾽ ἑαυτοῦ, lit. *through* or *by means of Himself.*

966. Gk. τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοὸς ἡμῶν ἀνανεούμεθα.

967. Gk. διὰ τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁμοφροσύνης τε καὶ συναφείας.

968. Gk. ἕκαστος μέλος τῆς Ἐκκλησίας πάσης ὤν, lit. *each one being a member of all the Church,* in other words, *each one being a member of the entire body of Christ.*

969. Gk. ἀλλ᾽ οὐ μέλος καὶ οἰκεῖος.

970. Gk. τὸν δι᾽ εὐσέβειαν εἰς ἀδελφότητα ᾠκειωμένον. Clearly, St. Gregory is referring here to monastics.

971. Gk. πάντας τοὺς κατὰ Χριστὸν βαπτίσματος ἀνατεθειμένους τῷ Θεῷ, lit. *those who have been committed to God through baptism* according to *Christ* (*κατὰ* Χριστόν). See also n. 972 (§ 16 below), and nn. 1037 (Hom. LVII, 16) and 1128 (Hom. LX, 1) below.

972. Gk. τοὺς διὰ τῆς χάριτος τοῦ κατὰ Χριστὸν βαπτίσματος ἡγιασμένους, see n. 971 above.

Homily Fifty-Five

973. The "Sunday of the Forefathers", the second Sunday before Christmas (for which the Gospel reading is Luke 14:16–24), marks the commemoration of Christ's ancestors "according to the flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα), see n. 952 above, *cf.* also n. 963 above, and n. 1011 (Hom. LVII) below.

974. Gk. τῆς ἱερᾶς Ἐκκλησίας.

975. Gk. παρρησίᾳ, lit. *openly and with gusto.*

976. Gk. ὡς μέρος [lit. *as a part*] ὄντες τοῦ τῶν ἁγίων πληρώματος. That is to say, the saints of the Old Dispensation are also full and equal partakers of the perfection that is in Christ.

977. Gk. συνετῶς, lit. *intelligently, wisely*; Lampe, *s.v.*

978. Gk. ἀχρεῖον, lit. *useless,* hence *unprofitable, fruitless.*

979. See n. 978 above.

980. Heb. יִשְׂרָאֵל, *Yisra'el* (*Israel*), the name bestowed upon the patriarch Jacob by the Lord Himself at Peniel (Gen. 32:28). Its precise etymology is unclear, but in Christian tradition it has often been interpreted in the context of Jacob's exclamation in Gen. 32:30, "for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" [lit. "and my soul is saved"]; and so *e.g.* Clement of Alexandria interprets Israel as meaning *he who sees God* (ὁ Ἰσραὴλ ὁ ὁρῶν τὸν Θεόν), *Paedagogus* or *Tutor* I, 9, and St. Macarius the Egyptian ("the Great") explains that the name refers to *the mind that sees God* (Ἰσραὴλ ἑρμηνεύεται νοῦς ὁρῶν τὸν Θεόν), *Spiritual Homilies,* Hom. XLVII, 5; see Lampe, *s.v.* Ἰσραήλ.

981. Gk. τῇ κατὰ Χριστὸν γενεᾷ. lit. *to the generation according to Christ. Cf.* the *chosen race* (γένος ἐκλεκτόν) of 1 Pet. 2:9, and also *e.g. this new race* (καινὸν τοῦτο γένος) of the *Epsitle to Diognetus* I (2nd or 3rd cent.), and *the God-loving and God-fearing race of Christians* (τοῦ θεοφιλοῦς καὶ θεοσεβοῦς γένους τῶν Χριστιανῶν) in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* III, 2 (written after AD 156).

982. Gk. τοῦ δι᾽ ἡμᾶς ἐνανθρωπήσαντος ἐνυποστάτου Λόγου.

983. Gk. τί τῶν ὄντων ἢ γινομένων . . . ; lit. *what among beings and things made* or *created . . . ?*

984. Gk. ἵνα τὰ ἄνω φρονῇς, τὰ ἄνω ζητῇς.

985. The word used here is ἀδιάδοχος, lit. *without successor.*

986. Gk. τὸ ρευστὸν τοῦτο σῶμα.

987. An oblique reference to the many invasions which the Romans (Byzantines) suffered at the hands of the Serbs and others, see n. 380 above, and *cf.* n. 566.

HOMILY FIFTY-SIX

988. That is to say, this sermon was delivered on 21 December.

989. Gk. Διὰ τοῦτο ἀναγκαῖον ἕκαστον ὑμῶν. . . πνευματικὸν ἔχειν πατέρα. On the spiritual father, see *e.g.* Hom. XXVII, 1, n. 413 and Hom. XXVIII, 8, n. 488 above, and *cf.* also nn. 19, 180 and 424.

990. Gk. πνευματικὴν ἰατρείαν, lit. *spiritual treatment* or *cure*; *cf.* Lampe, *s.v.* ἰατρεία.

991. It was only natural that the Christmas fast, originally a preparatory period lasting but a few days, would develop according to the prototype of the Great Fast, and itself become (in the 7th century) a period of forty days' duration (*cf.* Fountoulis, *Reasonable Worship, op. cit.*, p. 333). Because of its entirely joyous theme, however, it never acquired the penitential character of Great Lent.

992. Gk. καθ᾽ ἣν ἔθος ἐστὶ σχεδὸν πᾶσι Χριστιανοῖς. St. Gregory is making the point that only those Christians who prepare themselves by means of the mystery or sacrament of confession and through works of repentance ought to partake of Holy Communion.

993. Gk. διάνοια.

994. That is to say, from a bishop or, by extension, a priest, who of course serves with the permission of the bishop. *Cf.* also *e.g.* nn. 19 and 424 above.

995. Gk. τῷ κανόνι τῆς εὐσεβείας, that is to say, by the *canons* of the Church, which, when administered by an experienced guide in the life in Christ, are able to bring about spiritual healing.

996. That is to say, *hath outraged* or *insulted* the Holy Spirit (Gk. ἐνυβρίσας, from ἐνυβρίζω, *to insult, outrage*).

997. Gk. ἀπαθὲς γάρ, lit. *for it is impassible,* that is, it does not suffer any change or diminution.

998. Gk. μύρον γὰρ δοχείῳ σαπρῷ οὐ πιστεύεται, St. Gregory the Theologain, *Tetrasticha* II; ref. found in Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 406, n. 11.

999. Gk. εἰ παθητόν.

1000. Gk. ὁμοιότης φιλότης, lit. *likeness is friendship,* Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 8 (1159^{b} 3–4).

1001. Gk. κοινωνήσας ἡμῖν παραπλησίως σαρκὸς καὶ αἵματος. Note παραπλησίως, lit. *about equal, nearly resembling* (see Liddell and Scott, *s.v.*); by which St. Gregory alludes to the fact that Christ became like unto us in all things save sin (*cf.* Heb. 4:15), by virtue of His virgin birth without seed, *cf.* nn. 194 and 208 above.

1002. Gk. καὶ παραδοξότερον, lit. *and stranger.*

1003. Gk. τὰ ἄδυτα.

1004. Gk. φθορά, see esp. n. 208 above (Hom. XVI, 5), and *cf.* nn. 96–97, 197, 204, 263, 644, 850–851 and 959.

1005. Gk. (πηγὴ) αἰσθητή, lit. *a sensible (spring), (a spring) perceived by the senses,* opp. (πηγὴ) νοητή, *a spiritual (spring)*, that is, perceived by the eye of the mind (νοῦς).

1006. Gk. ποταμοὺς . . . αἰσθητούς, *sensible (rivers), (rivers) perceived by the senses,* see n. 1005 above.

1007. Gk. ἄνεισι πηγὴ πηγὰς ἀφηεῖσα νοητάς, see nn. 1005–1006 above.

1008. Gk. κοινόν, lit. *common.*

1009. Gk. τὸν ἐκ τῆς μεταλήψεως ἁγιασμόν.

1010. Gk. οὕτω μεγάλη ἡ κόλασις τοῖς ἀχρειώσασιν ἑαυτοὺς μετὰ τὴν δωρεάν.

Homily Fifty-Seven

1011. The "Sunday of the Fathers" (Κυριακὴ τῶν Πατέρων), that is to say, the "Sunday before the nativity of Christ" (Κυριακὴ πρὸ τῆς Χριστοῦ γεννήσεως), for which the original theme of commemorating the ancestors of Christ "according to the flesh" (see Hom. LV, n. 973 above) was broadened to include all those who were well-pleasing to God from Adam to Joseph the Betrothed, and all the prophets and prophetesses, especially Daniel and the Three Holy

Children (feastday 17 December), see nn. 952 (Hom. LIV) and 973 (Hom. LV) and *cf.* n. 963. The Gospel reading for this Sunday is Matt. 1:1–25.

1012. Gk. καὶ μήτε πατέρα ἔχων ἑαυτοῦ προγενέστερον.

1013. Gk. καὶ πάντα λόγον.

1014. Gk. ἕν ἐστι καὶ κατ᾽ οὐδὲν διενήνοχεν. Note διενήνοχεν, διενήνοχα, from διαφέρω. God the Holy Trinity is one God, one Being, by virtue of the consubstantiality (*homoousion*) of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see n. 201, *cf.* nn. 128, 218 and 272), which springs from the *monarchy* of God the Father (μοναρχία τοῦ Πατρός, see *e.g.* St. Gregory the Theologian, *Third Theological Oration*, *On the Son*, *Oration* XXIX, 2), who is the sole source of the Godhead, by reason of the pre-eternal *communion* (κοινωνία) of His essence or nature (οὐσία, φύσις, the two terms being synonymous in post-Nicene theology) and His natural energy (φυσικὴ ἐνέργεια), and inasmuch as He is the pre-eternal *cause* (αἴτιος, αἴτιον, see *e.g.* St. Gregory the Theologian, *ibid.*, 3, St. John Damascene, *In Defence of the Holy Icons* I, 9: αἴτιον μὲν φυσικόν, ὁ Πατήρ· αἰτιατὸν δέ, ὁ Υἱός) of the existence of the divine hypostases of the Son and Holy Spirit (αἰτιατά, *caused* or *from the cause*), see n. 364 above, and *e.g.* St. Gregory of Nyssa, *To Ablabius: That There Are Not Three Gods* (PG 45:133C): τὴν κατὰ τὸ αἴτιον καὶ αἰτιατὸν διαφορὰν οὐκ ἀρνούμεθα.

1015. Gk. κεχαριτωμένη, see also *e.g.* Hom. XIV, 8, n. 196, and Hom. LIII, 61, n. 941 above.

1016. Gk. συνεργάσασθαι, from συνεργέω, *co-operate, work with* or *together*; *assist, help.* Hence, the Mother of God, more perfectly than any one before or after her, became a *co-worker* with God in His saving economy according to the flesh.

1017. Gk. ἁγία ἁγίων (ἁγία fem. sing. ἅγιος), lit. *saint of saints* or *holy of holies*. A play on the sanctuary (the Holy of Holies) of the Old Temple, where the Mother of God spent her childhood, see esp. Homs. LII and LIII above.

1018. Gk. θεοπρεπές, neut. of θεοπρεπής, lit. *befitting God, worthy of God.*

1019. The same interpretation for the name Seth, in the same words, is given in Hom. LII, 10 above, see esp. n. 795.

1020. Gk. Καὶ τοῦ τύπου τὸ κατάλληλον ὅσον; That is to say, *And how fitting* or *appropriate is Seth to be a prefiguration of Christ?*

1021. Gk. Ἐνώς, from Heb. אֱנוֹשׁ, *ʼnôsh* or *Enôsh, man* (*human being*), *mankind.*

1022. This is less a question of the present infinitive passive, *to be called* (Gk. ἐπικαλεῖσθαι) as whether we should be reading τῷ ὀνόματι Κυρίου, *by the name of the Lord,* instead of τὸ ὄνομα Κυρίου, *the name of the Lord.* See esp. n. 53 (Hom. V, 15), and Hom. LII, 10 (the wording of which is virtually identical to much of §§ 5–6 of this homily), and n. 796, for exactly the same use of this verse (and see the following paragraph, § 6); *cf.* also Hom. XXII, 7, where Palamas simply follows the Septuagint's rendering.

1023. Gk. οἱ Ἑβδομήκοντα, *the Seventy*, the number of Jewish scribes who translated the Hebrew scriptures into Greek (tradition has it that they were in fact *Seventy-Two*), made for the Library at Alexandria in 3rd cent. BC; commonly referred to as the "Septuagint" (Lat. *Septuaginta*, LXX), the translation of *the Seventy*.

1024. Gk. οὐκ ἀπᾴδουσιν οὐδὲν τῶν ἄλλων. St. Gregory is clearly aware of other translations of the Old Testament into Greek, in addition to that of the Seventy (LXX), the most likely being the versions of Aquila (*c.* AD 140), absurdly literal and near impenetrable to non-Jews, but considered useful for study purposes by Origen and St. Jerome (*c.* 345 – 420); of Theodotion (2nd cent.), whose work was more a revision than a translation – his text of Daniel, since the 4th cent., is used by the Orthodox Church in preference to that of the Septuagint; and that of Symmachus (later 2nd cent.), who preferred a more readable style to the strictly literal of the other two (see *ODCC, s.vv.*).

1025. "Hope", of course, being none other than the Lord Himself.

1026. Enoch, Gk. Ἐνώχ, from Heb. חֲנוֹךְ, *Ch*^{a}*nôkh, dedicated*.

1027. Gk. τοῖς νοῦν ἔχουσι, lit. *to those who have a mind* (i.e., capable of grasping this truth). Note, however, that this is not so much a statement referring to the capacity of the mind *per se*, but rather an allusion to the fact that the Holy Spirit reveals the truth about Holy Scripture and the Virgin Mary to those who have the correct spiritual disposition ("that the whole of divinely inspired Scripture was written because of the Virgin Mother of God", Gk. ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ θεόπνευστος Γραφὴ διὰ τὴν Θεοτόκον ἀνεγράφη Παρθένον). One's spiritual disposition, moreover, as in the case of repentance (*μετά-νοια*, lit. *a change of mind*), begins with the stance of the mind (νοῦς), which attracts the grace of the Holy Spirit, which illumines first the mind and then, through the mind, the whole human person – soul and body.

1028. Gk. ὅσοι οἱ δι᾿ ἑαυτῶν καὶ τῶν κατ᾿ αὐτούς.

1029. Noah, Gk. Νῶε, from Heb. נוֹחַ or נֹחַ, *Nôach* or *Nōach*, meaning *rest*. See esp. the LXX rendering of this verse: "And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall bring us rest (οὗτος διαναπαύσει ἡμᾶς) from our works, and from the toils of our hands" (Gen. 5:29 LXX). Note also the AV rendering: "This same shall comfort us" (Gen. 5:29).

1030. Shem, Gk. Σήμ, from Heb. שֵׁם, *Shêm*, traditional ancestor of the Semites or Semitic peoples.

1031. Note also that Japheth (Gen. 10:1) is said to be the ancestor of Mediterranean peoples, e.g. of the Greeks and Romans, see n. 162 above; while Ham is presented as the ancestor of the Hamites, peoples of North Africa, such as the Egyptians and Berbers.

1032. Gk. Καὶ τίς ἐξείποι τὰς κατὰ τὸν Ἀβραὰμ θεοπτίας, τὰς θεοσημείας. τὰς θείας ἐπαγγελίας.

1033. By his edict of 538 (*cf.* Ezra 1:2–4; 6:3–5), king Cyrus II (550 – 530 BC) first authorized the return of the Jews from exile and the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem, returning all the vessels originally taken away by Nebuchadnezzar (597 and 587 BC; *cf.* Ezra 1:7–11; 5:12–16), king of Babylon (605/4 – 562 BC). It was Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah, who led the first wave of Jews back from exile (Ezra 1:8), and under whom the foundations of the Second Temple were laid, in the reign of Cyrus (Ezra 5:16); and Zerubbabel who, shortly after Darius I had become king (522 – 486 BC), succeeding Cambyses, led what must have been a second, greater wave of immigrants, and who saw to it that the rebuilding of the Second Temple was fully under way. (Begun in 520 it was dedicated under the prophets Haggai and Zecharia around 515 BC.) It would seem, therefore, that St. Gregory, like many scholars today, identifies Sheshbazzar with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2; 3:2; 5:2).

1034. Interestingly, in the first part of his address (1 Esd. 4:14–32), Zerubbabel argues in favour of the excellence of women.

1035. Gk. ἀποκατάστασις.

1036. See esp. Homs. XXXIV and XXXV, and Hom. XLIV, 2 above.

1037. Note that one is "born again in the Spirit" (ὁ ἀναγεννηθεὶς ἐν Πνεύματι) "through Christian baptism" (διὰ τοῦ κατὰ Χριστὸν βαπτίσματος), see n. 971 (Hom. LIV, 15) above.

1038. *Spiritual death* (Gk. νοητὸς θάνατος); *physical death* (Gk. αἰσθητὸς θάνατος).

1039. Gk. συνθήκας.

1040. *Cf.* St. Symeon the New Theologian, in *Ethical Orations* X, 448–470, who says, "Baptism is not sufficient for salvation" (found in Krivocheine, *In the Light of Christ*, , *op. cit.*, pp. 109–110); and see esp. Hom. XXXVIII, 9–11, which refers to the people of Israel, who though baptized in the cloud, were not saved, for they did not enter the Promised Land (1 Cor. 10:1–5).

1041. Gk. ἁμαρτίας ὑπάρξας ἐκτός (*cf.* Heb. 4:15). The sinlessness of Christ is based on the mystery of the reality of the incarnation of God (hypostatic union and the *communicatio idiomatum*, see *e.g.* n. 41), because of which Christ's human will was always in perfect harmony with His divine will, which is the very same will of God the Father, see n. 208 and esp. n. 331, and *cf.* 364 above.

1042. That is to say, *repentance* (μετάνοια) is a *mediatrix* (μεσῖτις), a means by which we may be restored to a state of grace.

1043. Gk. μεταμέλεια, lit. *change of purpose, regret, repentance* (Liddell and Scott, *s.v.*).

HOMILY FIFTY-EIGHT

1044. Internal evidence would suggest that this homily was delivered not long after the civil war had ended, see nn. 1, 376, 676 above, n. 1091 below, and Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 16–17.

1045. Gk. καὶ συνυψώσατε τὴν ὑμετέραν διάνοιαν.

1046. Gk. οὐρανὸς τῶν οὐρανῶν and ὕδατα ὑπερῷα στεγάζοντα τὰ οὐράνια, see esp. n. 242, and *cf.* n. 23 above.

1047. Gk. ἀλλὰ Θεοῦ καὶ σαρκὸς διὰ νοῦ μεμιγμένων ἀφύρτως εἰς μιᾶς θεανδρικῆς ὑποστάσεως ὕπαρξιν. It is important to note that St. Gregory's reference here to the *theandric hypostasis* (θεανδρικὴ ὑπόστασις) of the Son and Word of God is not understood in terms of a union of a human person with the divine person of the Word, see n. 41 and esp. Hom. V, 2, n. 48, and *cf.* nn. 221 and 947. In Christ, therefore, we have the natural or essential union of human nature with only one of the three divine hypostases of the Holy Trinity – the second hypostasis of the Son and Word of God. Consequently, Christ's divine hypostasis is composite only in the sense that the second person of the Holy Trinity, as a single *prosopic* unity, assumed flesh or human nature and not a human person. Christ is thus one divine person, who wholly and properly possesses the divine nature of the Father, and who uniquely and exclusively assumed human nature for our sake. As St. Cyril of Alexandria puts it in his *Second Letter to Nestorius:* "Scripture did not say that the Logos united the *prosopon* [*i.e.* the person] of a man to Himself, but that He became flesh", see Hom. V, 2, n. 48 above; and see more generally, St. Cyril's famous treatise entitled, *That Christ is One* (PG 75:1253–1361).

1048. Gk. τέως.

1049. Gk. τεχθεὶς ἀπαθῶς, ὡς ἀπαθῶς συνελήφθη.

1050. Gk. καὶ τὸ τοῦ προσλήμματος θεῖον καὶ ἀπόρρητον ὕψος ὑπερεξῃρημένον καὶ νοῦ καὶ λόγου παντός.

1051. Gk. ψιλοῖς ἀνθρώποις φύσιν ὁμόθεον.

1052. Gk. ὁμοφυεῖ, that is, the Holy Spirit is *of one nature* with Christ, the Word of God incarnate, in His divinity.

1053. God the Holy Spirit is the divine unction and God the Word, now come in the flesh (incarnate), is the one annointed.

1054. Gk. μετόχους, lit. *partakers, sharers, communicants.*

1055. Gk. Θεοῦ γὰρ μόνου τὸ μὴ μετέχειν, ἀλλὰ μετέχεσθαι. All rational and spiritual creatures, both angels and men, were created to partake of the divine life of the Holy Trinity and to rise above the limitations of created nature to the plane of divine existence, and not *vice versa.* This, after all, is the very purpose of the incarnation itself: "the Word of God, Jesus Christ our Lord: who, on account of His boundless love became what we are, so that we might become what He is" (*Verbum Dei, Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum: qui propter immensam suam dilectionem factus est quod sumus nos, uti nos perficeret esse quod est ipse*, St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies* V, pref., PG 17:1120), or "He became man that we might be made gods" (αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐνηνθρώπησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν, St. Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation of the Word* 54). Thus, the extension of the communion of the divine life of the Holy Trinity to embrace all reasonable creatures is the intention of the divine economy and defines our hypostatic existence as ecclesial beings.

1056. Gk. καὶ προτίθεται τοῖς βουλομένοις εἰς μέθεξιν, *cf.* nn. 1054 and 1055.

1057. Gk. ἐσχάτῳ κινδύνῳ, the final danger being death (1 Cor. 15:26).

1058. Adam fell, not because He desired to become God, but because he desired to become God *without* God. Our deification (θέωσις) can only be brought about *in and through* the one true God (see n. 1055), whose will it is to make us *by grace* all that He is *by nature.* The majesty of the Orthodox Patristic vision of man consists precisely in the fact that we have been called to live the uncreated life of the Triune God, see esp. n. 193 (Hom. XIV, 1).

1059. Gk. ὡς μὴ κατὰ μετοχὴν τὴν ἔπαρσιν κεκτημένος, lit. *as not possessing arrogance according to* (as a result of) *participation* (in something or someone else). That is, there was no pre-existing arrogance (ἔπαρσις) for Satan to participate in, as he is himself the father and inventor of it (*cf.* John 8:44).

1060. Gk. αὐτοκακία, lit. *evil in itself.*

1061. See esp. nn. 214 and 337, and *cf.* nn. 194, 331 and 927.

1062. Gk. καὶ ἐπείπερ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ κατὰ φύσιν ἴσος ἐστὶ καὶ ὁμότιμος.

1063. Gk. ποιεῖ καὶ τὴν κτίσιν ἴσην κατὰ χάριν ἑαυτῇ καὶ ὁμότιμον. Differentiation among created beings ("the superiority and inferiority observable in beings", § 4 above) was abolished by the incarnation of the Son and Word of God, inasmuch as Christ the God-man has made it possible for all rational creatures to become by grace what God is by nature (see nn. 1055 and 1058). Herein lies true equality (see nn. 272, 586 and 948).

1064. Gk. καὶ καταβὰς ἄνωθεν εἰς τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἐσχατιὰν καὶ ταύτην ἑαυτῷ συνδήσας ἀλύτως, *cf.* St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names* I, 4 (PG 3:592A), esp. τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἐσχατιάν, ἐξ ἧς ἀρρήτως ὁ ἁπλοῦς Ἰησοῦς συνετέθη.

1065. Gk. τὰ κάτω πεποίηκεν ἄνω.

1066. Gk. τὸ ἀπερίτρεπτον ἔλαβον, lit. *they received immoveability* or *security* (*cf.* Lampe, *s.v.* ἀπερίτρεπτος). Thus, the angelic powers received stability, spiritual steadfastness, see *e.g.* n. 214 above, and *cf.* n. 337.

1067. Gk. τὸ εὐδιόρθωτον ἔχουσι, lit. *they* [*human beings*] *have the ability to be well-corrected, easily remedied* (*cf.* Lampe, *s.v.* εὐδιόρθωτον).

1068. Gk. τῦφος, *conceit, arrogance, pride.*

1069. Gk. ὑπ᾽ αἴσθησιν ὁρᾶται καὶ ὀφθαλμοῖς σαρκὸς ὑποπίπτει.

1070. Gk. ὁ τὰ πάντα ὁρίζων καὶ ὑπ᾽ οὐδενὸς ὁριζόμενος.

1071. Gk. ἀχρόνως καὶ ἀπαθῶς καὶ ἀνάρχως, *cf.* n. 153 above.

1072. Gk. ὁ συμφυὴς τῷ ἀνωτάτῳ Πατρί.

1073. Gk. τὴν ἐσχάτην καταδίκην τῆς ἡμῶν φύσεως. Christ voluntarily deigned to become subject to death and corruption (see nn. 96–97, 204, 208–209, and *cf.* n. 263), even though He Himself was without sin (*cf.* Heb. 4:15). He accepted our mortality and the corruptibility of our fallen human nature, which came about as a result of Adam's sin, from the moment of His conception in the Holy Virgin's womb (see esp. n. 208 above).

1074. Gk. συναπογράφεται τοῖς δούλοις, that is, for taxation purposes.

1075. Gk. πάντως τὴν δουλείαν ποιῶν οὐδὲν ἀτιμοτέραν τῆς δεσποτείας, lit. *clearly making servitude* or *service* (δουλεία) *no less honourable than lordship* or *mastery* (δεσποτεία). See Lampe, *s.vv.*

1076. Gk. ὁ τότε δοκῶν εἶναι τῆς γῆς δεσπότης, the earthly ruler at the time of Christ's nativity being the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus (27 BC – AD 14).

1077. Gk. ἀφῆκεν αὐτὴν ἅτε λογικὴν κτισθεῖσαν καὶ γνώμης κυρίαν οὖσαν τοῖς ἰδίοις λογισμοῖς διοικεῖσθαι καὶ κατ᾽ οἰκείαν κίνησιν. See also *e.g.* n. 39 and esp. n. 331 above, and *cf.* n. 675.

1078. Gk. τὸ κατὰ φύσιν opp. τὸ παρὰ φύσιν, see nn. 209 and 696; and *cf.* τὸ ὑπὲρ φύσιν, nn. 208 and 428 above.

1079. Gk. Εἰ γὰρ ἐκ σπέρματος ἦν, οὐκ ἂν καινὸς ἄνθρωπος, see esp. n. 194 (Hom. XIV, 5) above.

1080. Gk. ἀρκεῖν.

1081. Gk. ἀλλὰ χρὴ πηγὴν ἐν ἑαυτῇ φέρειν. A city would need to have a spring "from within itself", that is, within its borders, in order to provide its inhabitants with an uninterruptible supply of water.

1082. Gk. μετοχῇ χάριτος.

1083. Gk. ἀλλ' ἔδει κρήνης τῇ κτίσει τὴν πηγὴν ἐχούσης ἐν ἑαυτῇ.

1084. See n. 66 above.

1085. Gk. Ἡ γὰρ πλήρης ζωὴ καὶ δεσποτικὴ καὶ ἀΐδιος, ἡ πάνσοφος καὶ παντοδύναμος φύσις ἑνοῦται τῇ ἐξ ἀβουλίας ἀπατηθείσῃ καὶ ἐξ ἀσθενείας τῷ πονηρῷ δουλωθείσῃ καὶ ἐξ ἐνδείας θείας ζωῆς ἐν ᾅδου μυχοῖς κειμένῃ, ὡς ἂν ἐμποιήσῃ ταύτῃ σοφίαν καὶ δύναμιν καὶ ἐλευθερίαν καὶ ζωὴν ἀδιάπτωτον. As in so many cases, it is difficult to capture the poetry of St. Gregory's writing, see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 16.

1086. Gk. συμπροσκυνῶν πάντως τούτοις.

1087. Gk. δι' ἧς καὶ τῶν εἰδώλων αὐτοὺς ἀπήλλαξε. St. Gregory has Isa. 19: 1 ff in mind, but for specific mention of the fall of Egyptian idols, *cf. e.g.* the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* XII–XIV, Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 96–97, which was probably compiled in Latin in the eighth or ninth century (Lat. title, *Liber de Infantia* or *Historia de Nativitate Mariae et de Infantia Salvatoris*), and influenced by the *Protevangelium Jacobi* (see n. 569 above) and also by the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (fifth cent.).

1088. Gk. καὶ θείαν λαμπρότητα καὶ βασιλείαν χαρισαμένῳ, see n. 229 above.

1089. For the liturgical "today", see n. 310 above (Hom. XXI, 2).

1090. Gk. Ὁ γὰρ ὠργισμένος τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων Θεὸς καὶ δειναῖς ἀραῖς τούτους ὑποβαλών.

1091. Notice such phrases as "Let us preserve this peace in ourselves", "Let us be at peace with God", "Let us be at peace with ourselves", "Thus we shall put an end to the civil conflict in our own midst", and "Let us be at peace with one another", all of which suggest that this homily was delivered not long after the civil war had ended, see n. 1044 above.

Homily Fifty-Nine

1092. Gk. συντασσόμεθα.

1093. Gk. ἀποτασσόμενοι.

1094. Gk. κατὰ διάνοιαν.

1095. Gk. νοερῶς ἀναπέμπει τὴν εὐχαριστίαν Θεῷ.

1096. The following is based on the description of the baptismal rite found in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of Dionysius the Areopagite, which *plus ou moins* continues to be the practice of the Orthodox Church today (see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 17, and p. 483, n. 1a).

Note that today, for practical reasons, holy baptism is often treated as a private affair, usually among relatives and close friends only; but this should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the mystery, as the rite of initiation into the Christian community, is an event in which the whole congregation is meant to participate, see *e.g.* St. Hippolytus of Rome, *The Apostolic Tradition* XXII.

1097. Gk. τοῖς σωζομένοις.

1098. Gk. συντάξασθαι τῷ Χριστῷ.

1099. Gk. τὴν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον φῶς ἀνάβλεψιν.

1100. Gk. τῷ ἁγίῳ ἐλαίῳ τῆς χρίσεως. Χρίσις, *anointing*, from which the name Christ (Χριστός), *anointed one*, is derived.

1101. Gk. Μετὰ γὰρ τὴν ἱερὰν ἀλοιφήν, or *after the holy ointment*.

1102. Strictly speaking, just as in the case of the holy eucharist, the mystery of holy baptism is to be performed by the bishop. See *e.g.* St. Hippolytus of Rome, *op. cit.*, II, VIII and esp. XXI–XXIII.

1103. For St. Gregory's tripart division of the soul, see n. 32 above.

1104. Gk. καὶ τὴν τῶν τριῶν, νοῦ, ψυχῆς ὁμοῦ τε καὶ σώματος, πρὸς ἀφθαρσίαν ἐπάνοδον.

1105. Gk. μύρῳ θείῳ.

1106. Notice that holy communion is administered immediately upon receiving holy baptism.

1107. Gk. ἀπολύει ... αὐτόν, lit. *dismisses him*.

1108. Gk. καὶ Χριστῷ σύσσωμον καὶ τοῦ θείου Πνεύματος μέτοχον.

1109. Gk. διὰ τῆς τοῦ θείου τούτου μύρου χρίσεως.

1110. Gk. τὸ καταγνῶναί τινα ἑαυτοῦ ἐπὶ τοῖς οἰκείοις πλημμελήμασι. On the ethos of self-condemnation, see *e.g.* n. 430, and *cf.* n. 726 above.

1111. Gk. καὶ καταγνῶσιν ἑαυτῶν, see preceding note.

1112. Gk. γεέννῃ, lit. *to Gehenna*, see n. 46 above (Hom. IV, 25).

1113. Gk. τὴν μετριοφροσύνην.

1114. Gk. τὴν ἀλήθειαν.

1115. Gk. τὸ ψεῦδος, ὁ δόλος, ἡ διαβολή.

1116. Gk. ἡ ὀργή, τὸ μῖσος, ὁ φθόνος, ἡ μνησικακία (see n. 1178 below).

1117. Since the fourth century, the feast of Theophany, the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan by John the Baptist, is celebrated twelve days after Christmas (25 December), that is, on 6 January, *cf.* Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 498, n. 22a.

1118. Gk. τῷ διορατικῷ Πνεύματι.

1119. Gk. ὁ τρόπος ἐστὶ τῆς συναφείας τῆς θεότητος καὶ τῆς σαρκός.

1120. Gk. ἐκ τοῦ παλαιοῦ σπέρματος φύς, see esp. n. 194 above (Hom. XIV, 5).

1121. Gk. προστροπή, lit. *pollution* (Lampe, *s.v.*).

1122. Gk. ὁ ἄνευ σπορᾶς ἐκ Παρθένου ἁγίας σαρκωθείς, see esp. n. 194 above (Hom. XIV, 5).

1123. Gk. τῆς πατρῴας ἀρᾶς.

1124. Gk. φανερῶς, that is, openly, in a way which can be clearly seen and better understood.

1125. Gk. τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦτο καὶ ἐφίσταται καὶ ἀφίσταται αὐτεξουσίως ὡς ὁμοσθενὲς Πατρί τε καὶ Υἱῷ. Notice that as true and perfect God, consubstantial with God the Father and God the Son, the Holy Spirit visits, indwells and inspires man according to His good pleasure, and not the other way around. It is the human person's duty, of course, to do everything in his power to attract the grace of the Paraclete, but it is He who determines if and when and for how long He enters into the life of His creature. God is not a power that can be turned on and off at the will of man – He is the Creator and Sustainer of this vast universe, and the Saviour of mankind.

Homily Sixty

1126. Gk. Ῥηθεῖσα ἐν τῇ ἁγίᾳ ἑορτῇ τῶν Φώτων, lit. *Said* or *Spoken* (*i.e.* Homily delivered) *on the Holy Feast of Lights.*

1127. Gk. τὴν τῶν Φώτων ἡμέραν, see preceding note.

1128. Gk. περὶ τοῦ κατὰ Χριστὸν βαπτίσματος, see n. 971 (Hom. LIV, 15).

1129. Gk. ἐπίγνωσις, *recognition, acknowledgment.*

1130. Gk. συνθήκη δὲ καὶ ὑπόσχεσις, see also Hom. LIX, 1 above.

1131. Gk. διὰ συμβόλων ἱερῶν τελουμένων, that is to say, effected by means of the *liturgical acts* of holy baptism.

1132. Gk. προαιώνιον αὐτὸν δεικνύς, *cf.* n. 322 above.

1133. The word used here is "Gehenna" (Gk. γέεννα), see esp. n. 46 above (Hom. IV, 25).

1134. Gk. τὴν μετριοφροσύνην.

1135. Gk. τὸ ζωαρχικὸν Πνεῦμα.

1136. Gk. τὸ καθ᾽ ὑπόστασιν τῆς δημιουργοῦ θεότητος τριαδικόν, and *cf.* n. 144 above (Hom. XI, 9).

1137. Gk. ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων κτισμάτων, ἅτε μόνῳ ρήματι προαγομένων τοῦ Λόγου καὶ τοῦ λέγοντος Πατρὸς ἐκφαινομένων μόνον. Note, firstly, that St. Gregory is referring here to the other *rational* or *reasonable* creatures (λογικὰ κτίσματα), and secondly, that he is once again underlining the common and unified action of the three divine persons of the Holy Trinity in the mystery of the divine economy, that is to say, in God's self-revelation and His direct and unmediated involvement in the life of His creature, see *e.g.* nn. 201 and esp. 364, and *cf.* n. 150 above.

1138. Gk. τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεως ἀναπλαττομένης ἐν Χριστῷ.

1139. Gk. τῆς ἀνωτάτω τε καὶ παντουργοῦ Τριάδος. Note Gk. παντουργός, lit. *accomplishing* or *effecting all things.*

1140. Gk. τὸ σωστικόν.

1141. Gk. ἀλλ᾽ ὅτι καὶ μόνος [*sc.* ὁ ἄνθρωπος] κατ᾽ εἰκόνα ταύτης [*sc.* τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος], see n. 66 above.

1142. Gk. πνεῦμα μόνον ἔχει ζωτικόν, see n. 66 above.

1143. Gk. νοῦ δὲ καὶ λόγου τελέως ἀμοιρεῖ, see n. 66 above.

1144. Gk. ἅτε νοεροὶ καὶ λογικοί, see n. 66 above.

1145. Gk. ἀλλ᾽ οὐχὶ καὶ πνεῦμα ζωοποιόν, ἐπεὶ μηδὲ σῶμα τὸ παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ ζωοποιούμενον, see n. 66 above.

1146. Gk. κατ᾽ εἰκόνα τῆς τρισυποστάτου φύσεως, lit. *in the image of the tri-hypostatic nature,* where *nature* (φύσις) means *being.*

1147. Gk. νοῦν ἔχει καὶ λόγον καὶ πνεῦμα τοῦ σώματος ζωοποιόν, ἐπεὶ καὶ σῶμα τὸ ζωοποιούμενον, see n. 66 above.

1148. Gk. οἷά τινος ἀρχετύπου τῆς κατὰ ψυχὴν ἡμῶν εἰκόνος.

1149. Gk. Συντείνατε ἀλλὰ τὴν ὑμετέραν διάνοιαν, ἀδελφοί, παρακαλῶ, καὶ προσέχετε τοῖς λεγομένοις ἀκριβῶς τὸν νοῦν.

1150. Gk. δι᾽ ἑκατέρου τε μυστηρίου καὶ δι᾽ ἀμφοτέρων καὶ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος θεουργουμένων καὶ σπέρματα ζωῆς ἀκηράτου δεχομένων.

1151. Gk. τρισὶ μέντοι χαρακτῆρσι συναφέσιν. Gk. χαρακτήρ, *person* (Lampe, *s.v.*).

1152. Gk. τῆς ἀνωτάτω καὶ δεσποτικῆς ἱεραρχίας. Once again, St. Gregory is pointing to the grandeur of God's ultimate purpose in His creation of man *vis-à-vis* the angelic powers and in terms of the celestial hierarchy, as found in St. Dionysius the Areopagite and St. John Damascene. See Hom. XXII, 4, esp. n. 335 above, and see also the following note (n. 1153). Notice that for St. Gregory the raising of our human nature, in the person of Christ, to the right hand of God the Father, is a clear indication that, "Through Christ we have obtained immortality and have been called up to heaven, and our nature is enthroned on the right hand of majesty in heaven far above every principality and power" (Hom. XVI, 17); which is why Palamas can say, "Only our human nature, made equal to God in the divine person of Christ, possesses utterly perfect purity and can contain . . . all the radiance and splendour, power and energy of the divine Spirit", and that at the sight of Christ being baptized in the Jordan, even the angels "drew back" in amazement at what was being accomplished. See n. 21, and *cf.* nn. 272, 575 and 586.

1153. On the uniquely exalted position of man, even as compared to the angelic powers, see esp. n. 21 (Hom. III, 5), and *cf.* n. 559 (Hom. XXXVI, 2), on the different kinds of angels.

1154. On Christ praying, see n. 41 above.

1155. On St. John the Baptist filled with the grace of prophecy even from his mother's womb, see also Hom. XL, 4–5.

1156. See St. Gregory's interpretation of St. John's strap in Hom. LIX, 13 above: "The strap of these shoes is the way in which His divinity is joined with His flesh, which is beyond words, and which even the highest man born of woman is inadequate to analyse and clarify."

1157. Gk. καὶ τὸ ἐξ αὐτοῦ [*sc.* τοῦ Πατρὸς] Πνεῦμα προελθὸν ἐκπορευτῶς.

1158. Gk. τοὺς ἐξ αἰῶνος καὶ εἰς αἰῶνας λόγους τῆς προνοίας.

1159. Gk. ὁ πρωταγωνιστὴς ἐν μάρτυσι, lit. *the first-line soldier* or *first champion among martyrs* (*cf.* Lampe, *s.vv.* πρωταγωνιστής and ἀγωνιστής), that is to say, the first to suffer death for Christ.

1160. Gk. ὡς καὶ πρῶτον τῆς ἀθλήσεως μάρτυρα.

1161. Gk. συνάφεια.

1162. Gk. οὐχ ἁπλῶς συνάφεια κηρύττεται, ἀλλ᾽ ἀλληλουχία τις ὑπερφυὴς ἅμα καὶ διηνεκὴς καὶ παντελὴς καὶ ἀσύγχυτος.

1163. Gk. εἷς ἀναδείκνυται Θεὸς ἐν θεότητι τρισυποστάτῳ καὶ παντοδυνάμῳ.

1164. Gk. καὶ τὴν ἀλλήλων συμφυΐαν καὶ τὴν διάκρισιν.

1165. Gk. ἐκ τῆς ὑπερανῳκισμένης δεσποτείας. Gk. ὑπερανῳκισμένος, -η, from ὑπερανοικίζω.

1166. Gk. τὴν δὲ διάκρισιν διὰ τῆς τῶν ὑποστατικῶν ὀνομάτων ὑπαλλαγῆς καὶ τῆς σχέσεως. By virtue of Their common essence or nature and Their common natural energy, the three divine persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – are one consubstantial and indivisible God, one supreme Triune Being. Consequently, all that stems from Their consubstantiality – Their glory, kingdom, grace, power, light, etc. – They hold *in common* (κοινά). At the same time, however, each divine person or hypostasis is unique and differs from the other two by virtue of His distinguishing personal characteristic, known in Patristic theology as the hypostatic *mode of existence* (τρόπος ὑπάρξεως). Thus the mode of existence of the Father is that He is *unbegotten* or *unoriginate*; of the Son, that He is *begotten* of the Father; and of the Holy Spirit, that He is from the Father *by procession* and not by generation. St. Gregory adds that the name itself of each member of the Holy Trinity also denotes the *relation* (σχέσις) that each hypostasis has with God the Father (see *monarchy* of the Father, n. 1014 above). The modes of existence, therefore, are not shared among the members of the Holy Trinity, that is, they are *incommunicable* (ἀκοινώνητα), and this preserves and safeguards the uniqueness of each divine person, which is why the *unoriginate* Father alone is the Father, the *Only-begotten* Son alone is the Son, and the all-holy Spirit, *who proceeds from the Father,* alone is the Holy Spirit; and hence there is no confusion of persons in God the Holy Trinity.

1167. That is to say, the human nature of Christ does not introduce a fourth person, which would make the Trinity a *Quarternity* (see *e.g.* St. Gregory the Sinaïte, *Discourse on the Transfiguration* 20). Even after the incarnation, then, God remains Trinity, see esp. n. 1047 above (Hom. LVIII, 2).

1168. Gk. τὴν ὑπεύθυνον ἡμῶν φύσιν ἐν ἑαυτῷ καινὴν ὑποστήσαντα. Note that Gk. ὑπεύθυνος, means *guilty* in the sense of *responsible* (*cf.* Lampe, *s.v.*).

1169. Gk. οὐχ ὑπόστασιν παρ᾽ ἡμῶν ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ μονογενὴς Υἱός, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἀναλαβὼν ἐκαινούργησε φύσιν ἑνωθεὶς αὐτῇ κατ᾽ ἰδίαν ὑπόστασιν. See n. 48 above (Hom. V, 2).

1170. Gk. μεταδίδωσι, from μεταδίδωμι, *impart, distribute, communicate* (*cf.* Liddell and Scott, *s.v.* and Lampe, *s.v.*).

1171. Gk. μετάδοσις, see preceding note (*cf.* Liddell and Scott, *s.v.*).

1172. That is to say, man was created *according to* the image of God (κατ᾽ εἰκόνα Θεοῦ, Gen. 1:27), and the image of God is none other than Christ, the pre-eternal Son and Word of God, who is the express image of the Father (*cf.* Heb. 1:3). Christ, therefore, is man's archetype: anthropology is based on Christology and not *vice versa*.

1173. Gk. σχεδὸν πάντα δι᾽ αὐτόν [*sc.* τὸν ἄνθρωπον].

1174. Gk. εἰ μή τις ἐρεῖ καλῶς.

1175. Once again, man is the focal point of the divine dispensation, see n. 21.

1176. Gk. Εὐδοκία γάρ ἐστι τὸ προηγούμενον καὶ ἀγαθὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τέλειον θέλημα.

Homily Sixty-One

1177. For which the Gospel pericope is Luke 17:12–19.

1178. Gk. καὶ μνησικάκους ᾐνίττετο. From Gk. μνησικακία, lit. *remembrance of wrongs* or *evils* (committed against one's self).

1179. Gk. τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς λογιζόμενον, *the reasoning part of the soul.* See λογιστικόν, n. 117.

1180. The point being made here by St. Gregory is simply that the term used by St. Luke, Gk. ἐπιστάτης, usually translated as *master,* literally refers to an *overseer* or *superintendent,* in other words, to *one who has been given a place of authority over others* by a still higher authority, and so not one whose power and authority is absolute. Therefore, the title ascribed here to Christ by the lepers is incorrect, although, as St. Gregory continues, their request would presuppose that Christ could be none other than God, since only God could heal not just one but ten lepers, and indeed, as Palamas says, from such a great distance.

1181. Gk. πᾶσι τοῖς νοῦν ἔχουσιν, lit. *to all that have a mind* (to understand).

1182. Gk. σωφρονοῦντες, ἀληθεύοντες, δικαιοπραγοῦντες.

1183. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you* (John 14:27).

1184. *Cf.* the following lines from one of the oldest surviving eucharistic prayers, from the *Didache* or *Teaching of the Lord through the Twelve Apostles* (1st cent.) IX: "As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered together became one, so may Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom."

1185. Gk. κατὰ Θεόν, lit. *according to God, in God.*

1186. On references to Christ as Father, see n. 2 above.

Homily Sixty-Two

1187. For which the Gospel pericope is Luke 19:1–10.

1188. St. Gregory refers here to two of his homilies: the first, On the Healing of the Ten Lepers (Luke 17:12–19), is read on the Twelfth Sunday of Luke, and is preserved in the corpus as Hom. LXI (see above); the second, however, On the Healing of the Blind Man (near Jericho), is the subject of the Gospel reading for the Fourteenth Sunday of Luke (Luke 18:35–43), On the Healing of the Blind Beggar near Jericho, the homily for which has been sadly lost (*cf.* Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 18).

1189. Gk. ἐκεῖ καὶ ὁ νοῦς σου, *there will your mind be also.* St. Gregory obviously prefers *mind* (νοῦς) here to *heart* (καρδία) in Matt. 6:21 (ἐκεῖ ἔσται καὶ ἡ καρδία σου), probably because it is more specific. While καρδία generally refers to the centre of one's being or even to one's entire soul or being, νοῦς is understood as *the head of the soul* (see Hom. VII, 11, nn. 82–83) and indeed as *the eye of the soul* (see Hom. III, 21, n. 32), or as *the supreme faculty of the soul,* see esp. Hom. LIII, 58, n. 911. It is also worth noting in passing that the Hebrew לֵבָב, *lēbhābh,* לֵב, *lēbh,* can mean either *mind* (νοῦς) or *heart* (καρδία), depending on the context, see *e.g.* Exod 7:23, Deut. 6:5 and Josh. 14:7.

1190. Gk. Τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ, *At that time,* a customary opening to the Gospel reading in church. (Other such openings include: "The Lord said . . .", "And it came to pass . . .") This suggests that Palamas' chief resources are the liturgical texts of the Church. See also n. 438 above (Hom. XXIX, 3).

1191. According to Aristotelian cosmology, upon which St. Gregory's is in certain respects based, the earth was at the centre of the cosmos and the sun revolved around the earth, see esp. nn. 21–22 above.

1192. Gk. οὐκ ἀπεπήδησε, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐπεπήδησε, notice the *jeu de mots.*

1193. Gk. ἡ τοῦ ἀνάρχου Πατρὸς ἐνυπόστατος σοφία, see Hom. VIII, 8, n. 94 and Hom. XXXV, 8, n. 537 above.

1194. Gk. ἀντὶ φιλαργύρου φιλόθεον, ἀντὶ ἀδίκου δίκαιον, ἀντὶ μισοξένου φιλόξενον. Once again, notice the *jeu de mots.*

1195. Gk. καθάπερ ἤδη καὶ ὁρᾶτε γενόμενον.

1196. Gk. Ζακχαῖος ἑρμηνεύεται δικαιούμενος, from Gk. Ζακχαῖος, from Heb. זַכַּי, *zakkây, pure, just.*

1197. Gk. τὴν ἀκρίβειαν τοῦ νόμου, lit. *the preciseness of the law.*

1198. Gk. ἀφίεσθαι τοῦ μηδὲν μέγα καρποφοροῦντος νόμου.

1199. That is to say, such a person becomes truly justified, see § 8 and n. 1196.

1200. Gk. Ἡ φιλαργυρία ἁπάντων ἐστὶν αἰτία κακῶν· αἰσχροκερδείας, φειδωλίας, γλισχρότητος, ἀστοργίας, ἀπιστίας, μισανθρωπίας, ἁρπαγῆς, ἀδικίας, πλεονεξίας, τόκου, δόλου, ψεύδους, ἐπιορκίας καὶ πάντων τῶν τούτοις παραπλησίων.

1201. Gk. διὰ φιλαργυρίαν ἱεροσυλίαι, λωποδυσίαι, καὶ κλοπῆς εἶδος σχεδὸν ἁπάσης.

1202. Gk. ἀληθείας γάρ ἐστιν ἐπίγνωσις ἐν ἀνθρώποις ταπείνωσις.

1203. See Hom. XLVIII above, on the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

1204. This is the Gospel reading for the Ninth Sunday of Luke, on the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16–21), which does not survive in our corpus.

HOMILY SIXTY-THREE

1205. Delivered in Thessalonica at harvest-time of 1351, in church, before political, military and ecclesiastical dignitaries. This sermon is absent from the earlier homiliaries of Palamas and is occasionally included among his spiritual works, see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 19 (*cf. idem, op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 10), n. 1 above, and also n. 33 in my "Introduction".

1206. Gk. αὐτεξουσιότης, see n. 39 (Hom. IV, 8).

1207. Gk. αὐθαιρέτῳ ζωῇ.

1208. Gk. κενῶς γὰρ ἂν ἦν λογική, εἰ μὴ ταύτην εἶχε τὴν τιμήν. See n. 330 above, and St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* II, 27.

1209. Gk. λελυμένην οὖν λαβοῦσα πάσης ἀνάγκης τὴν γνώμην.

1210. Gk. ἂν μὲν τῷ Θεῷ προσεδρεύῃ.

1211. Gk. ἂν δὲ τῆς ἱερᾶς προσεδρείας ἐκείνης οἷον κόρον λαβοῦσα.

1212. Gk. τὴν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν φιλαμαρτήμονα γνώμην.

1213. Gk. ἐὰν πείθῃ ταῖς ἐμαῖς γνώμαις, lit. *that you might be persuaded by my opinions*, that is to say, *believe me, you have my word on it*.

1214. Gk. ἡ τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν ἁγνεία καὶ σωφροσύνη, ἡ φιλαλληλία.

1215. See n. 55 (Hom. V, 17).

1216. Gk. καὶ τὸν νοῦν οἶδε τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν, κτίσας οἰκειότατον ἑαυτῷ. That is to say, the mind, the νοῦς, is that aspect of human existence that most resembles God, without this blurring the created–uncreated distinction between the Creator and His creature, see *e.g.* nn. 117 and 1189 above.

1217. Gk. τοῦ θείου καὶ ἀνωτάτου φωτός, that is to say, of the uncreated light that is God Himself.

1218. Gk. τῷ νοερῷ τῆς ψυχῆς, that part of the soul which belongs to the mind (νοῦς), *cf.* also *e.g.* nn. 10, 264, 356 and 1144 above.

1219. Gk. ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῖς ἀλλοτρίαις ἐπιμαινόμεθα, from the verb ἐπιμαίομαι, *strive after* (Liddell and Scott, *s.v.*).

1220. Gk. ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ τοσοῦτο, βαβαί! προήχθη ἡ πάντολμος τόλμη, ὡς καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ τοῦ σωτηρίου πάθους ἀπόρρητα σύμβολα, τὸ Θεοῦ θεῶν θεῖον αἷμα, τὸ τῶν αἰώνων ἅπαξ ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς ἐκχυθὲν (βαφαί! πῶς ἡμᾶς οὐκ ἐπιλείπεις, ἥλιε, καθάπερ καὶ τότε τοὺς θεοκτόνους;), ἐπὶ χάρτου μέλανος δίκην ἐπιτιθέναι βεβαιουμένους τοὺς ὅρκους. St. Gregory's blistering remarks here appear to be directed against John V Palaeologus and Stephan Dušan, who signed written oaths in their plotting to overthrow John VI

Cantacuzenus, see J. Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*, Patristica Sorbonensia 3 (Paris, 1959), p. 392, and Chrestou, *loc. cit.*

1221. Gk. καὶ μέχρι μοναχῶν ἔφθασε τῆς ἐπικεχυμένης ἀδικίας τὸ ρεῖθρον. The allusion here to monks, even with St. Philotheus' description of Palamas' despairing followers, in *Encomium*, VII, 42 in mind, does not necessarily mean that St. Gregory's audience was chiefly monastic, as previously thought (Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 10, Meyendorff, *loc. cit.*, *cf.* Sophokles K. Oikonomos, *Gregory Palamas Archbishop of Thessalonica: Twenty-Two Homilies* (Athens, 1861), p. 287 [in Greek]). Professor Chrestou himself later revised his position on this question (see Chrestou, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 19; and p. xxvi of my "Introduction"; and n. 1205 above).

1222. Gk. εἰς ᾅδην, *cf.* n. 49 above.

1223. See Hom. III above.

1224. See Homs. II and LXII.

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